

THE *PATIO* OF VÉLEZ BLANCO: A NEW DRAWING AND THE COURTYARD OF THE FAJARDO CASTLE

TOMMASO MOZZATI¹

Università degli Studi di Perugia / The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This article presents a recently recovered visual representation of the *patio* from the castle of Vélez Blanco. The sketch, never published by the scientific bibliography dedicated to the *patio* and dating back to 1805, allows to formulate new hypotheses about its original installation: an important circumstance because — sold in 1904, after years of neglect and abandonment — the patio was disassembled and separated from its original location and is now displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The discovery of this sketch enriches in a fundamental way the knowledge surrounding the castle of Vélez Blanco, an extraordinary complex and one of the first examples of the importation to the Iberian peninsula of a classicizing vocabulary based on contemporary models offered by the Tuscan-Lombard artistic production.

Key words: patio; Vélez Blanco; Early Modern; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Marble; Architecture; Heritage; Fajardo; Marquis of Villafranca.

EL PATIO DE VÉLEZ BLANCO: UN NUEVO DIBUJO Y EL CASTILLO DE LOS FAJARDO

La contribución presenta un nuevo documento iconográfico relacionado con el patio del castillo de Vélez Blanco. El dibujo, nunca publicado por la bibliografía científica dedicada al patio y fechado en 1805, permite formular nuevas hipótesis sobre sus condiciones originales en la fortaleza andaluza, antes de su venta en 1904, al final de largos años de abandono (actualmente el patio está expuesto en el Museo Metropolitano de Nueva York). Este descubrimiento enriquece de una manera fundamental el conocimiento sobre un extraordinario complejo, una de las pruebas más antiguas de importación en la península Ibérica de un vocabulario arquitectónico y decorativo clasicista basado en modelos contemporáneos ofrecidos por la producción artística toscano-lombarda.

Palabras clave: patio; Vélez Blanco; Renacimiento; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Mármol; Arquitectura; Patrimonio; Fajardo; Marqueses de Villafranca.

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Survey of Spanish Early modern art often include the *patio* of Vélez Blanco as one of the most important examples of a new taste for sculptural and architectural decoration at the beginning of the Cinquecento.² The origins of this historiographical perspective can largely be traced to the pioneering survey by Manuel Gómez-Moreno, published in 1925 in the *Archivo Español de Arte y Arqueología*: an investigation “sobre el Renacimiento” in the Iberian Peninsula, creating an index of its widespread emergences between Castile and Andalusia.³

¹ tommaso.mozzati@metmuseum.org / ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3204-6463>.

² For example Mariás, 1989: 260-63. Nieto/Morales/Checa, 1989: 44-46.

³ Gómez-Moreno, 1925a: 35; 1925b: 76-77.



Fig. 1. Hauser y Menet, *View of the patio of the castle of Vélez Blanco, end of XIX century (?)*.

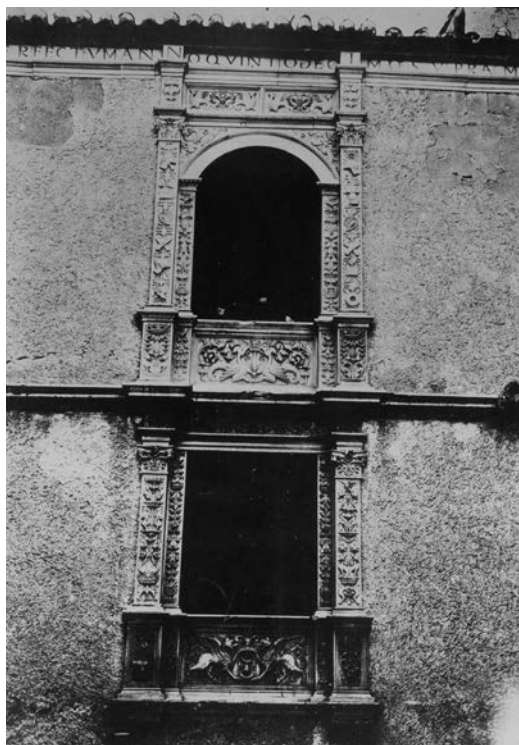


Fig. 2. Hauser y Menet, *View of the patio of the castle of Vélez Blanco, end of XIX century (?)*.

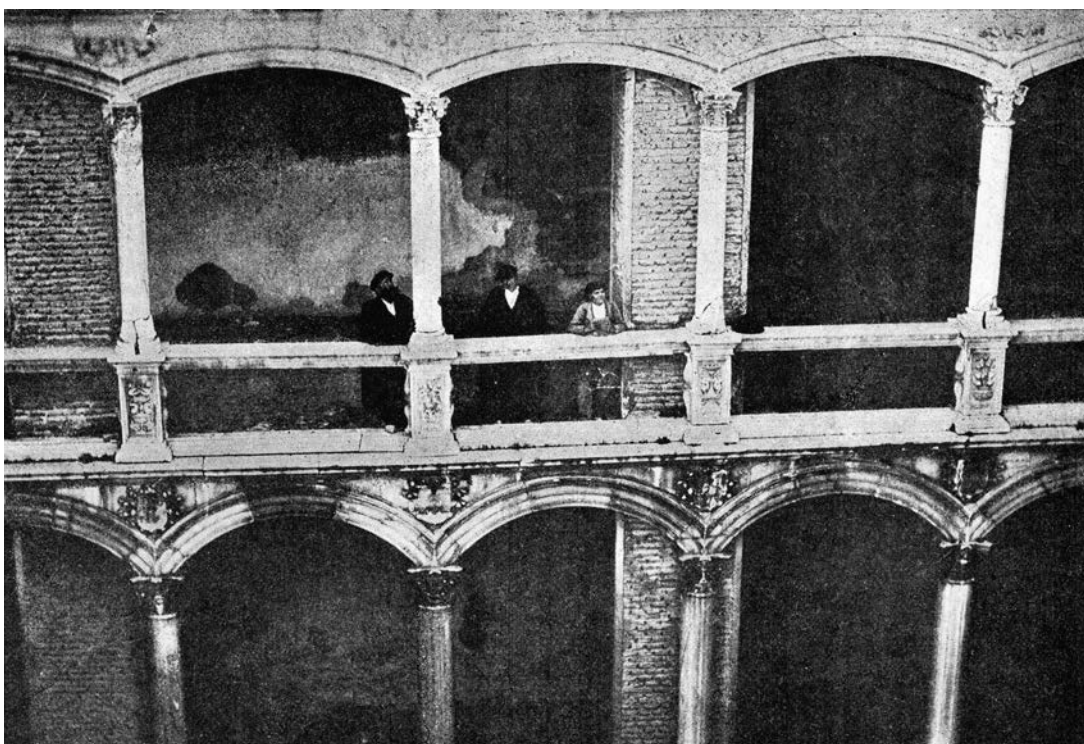


Fig. 3. Unknown photographer, *View of the patio of the castle of Vélez Blanco, 1881 (?)*.

The courtyard of the “castillo-palacio” in Vélez Blanco was built at the dawn of the 16th century by the will of Pedro Fajardo y Chacón. It is mentioned in two relevant passages of Gómez-Moreno’s contribution as a counterpoint to the porticoed structure at the heart of another fortress in the south of Spain, La Calahorra, whose erection was inaugurated only a few years prior.⁴ Though the author attributes this second *patio*, commissioned by Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar y Mendoza, to the hands of Italian workmen coordinated by Michele Carlone and active within Carrara (for the supply of marble), Genoa, and Spain, he describes the Fajardo courtyard at Vélez Blanco as the product of the exploitation of Iberian quarries, located among the Macael deposits, by foreign artists.⁵ The latter situation was perhaps the economical choice of a family not involved in a position of absolute primacy among the *entourage* of the Catholic Kings but nevertheless well informed about the ‘vagues’ promoted by the Court in terms of artistic enterprises.

However, the dissimilarity between the employed materials —marble from Carrara for La Calahorra and native stones for Vélez Blanco— is not the only difference underlined by Gómez-Moreno: while the first *patio* is illustrated by two coeval photographs,⁶ the chapter about the Fajardo castle only refers to the “reproducciones [...] en el Bol. de la Sociedad española de excursiones” printed in July 1904, i.e. the illustrations of an article by Joaquín Espín Rael, *El Alcázar de los Vélez (Recuerdos)*⁷ [figs. 1-2; see also fig. 3]. In fact, when Gómez-Moreno was publishing his thoughts about the *patio*, he was commenting on a monument sold two decades before to the dealer J. Goldberg: the marbles of the courtyard had been transferred to France, then to New York after its purchase in 1910 by the banker George Blumenthal, who wanted to build around them his new residence in Park Avenue.⁸

What this means is that it would have been very difficult, then, to draw up a detailed description of the *patio*, no longer *in situ*. In fact, in 1925, its iconography in the original installation suffered from an unsolvable scarcity of graphic or photographic testimonies, with these evidences being limited to a few, known images. For example, it is possible that Gómez-Moreno had access to the watercolor executed at the time of the first sale, perhaps by the same Goldberg who in 1904 brought the structure to Paris.⁹ That drawing [fig. 4], likely carried out with commercial purposes stressing the picturesque aspect of the castle, had in all likelihood a confidential circulation among possible buyers: however it cannot be ruled out that such a product reached the hands of Gómez-Moreno, a scholar at the center of a wide international circuit.¹⁰ He could have also known an architectural *maquette* of the fortress, assembled at the same moment.¹¹ Even if this model was created with analogous mercantile goals, it was showed to scholars as well: Vicente Lampérez y Romea, for example, used it for the plan of the castle, published in 1922 in

⁴ Gómez-Moreno, 1925a: 32-40, figs. 47-48.

⁵ Gómez-Moreno, 1925b: 76.

⁶ Gómez-Moreno, 1925a: figs. 47-48.

⁷ Gómez-Moreno, 1925b: 76 nota 3. See Espín Rael, 1904: infra pp. 134-135. The labels give as a reference for the photos: “Fototipia Hauser y Menet, Madrid”. The activities of this photographic company started in Madrid around 1890 (Ibáñez/Fernández, 2017: 151). It can also be assumed that Hauser y Menet, based in Madrid, bought photos made in Vélez Blanco by another photographer; on this company see Ibáñez/Fernández, 2017: 151-155. On the *Boletín* see Borja Bodelón Ramos, 2015: 309-315. In the ESDA Curatorial Files of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Esda Department, Curatorial Files, [from now on CF], 41.190.482, Vélez Blanco Castle), under the print of one of the photos published by Espín Rael’s article, a handwritten note states: “on Nov. 26, 1881”. This note agrees with the chronology of the shots of the courtyard published by Lentischo Puche, 2007: 98-99 a series that, in part, shows that the *patio* is in a similar state to the condition documented by the photos in Espín Rael’s article.

⁸ Hietikko, 2017.

⁹ On the watercolor see Raggio, 1964: 143, 145 fig. 5, 146; Raggio, 1968: 233-234, 236 fig. 6. The original sheet showed on the lower right corner the name “m. Goldberg” and a date, 1904. Goldberg was also a ‘decorator’; see Raggio, 1964: 142.

¹⁰ See Raggio, 1964: 143. Archival evidences about the delivery of a photographic set to Huntington on August 30 1904 can be found in CF, 41.190.482: Blumenthal — notes/correspondence.

¹¹ Raggio, 1968: 234 note 5. Blanc, 1999: 47, 102 note 10.



Fig. 4. J. Goldberg (?), *View of the patio of Vélez Blanco*, watercolor, location unknown.

his *Arquitectura civil española*.¹² Tellingly, in her article about the *patio* published in 1964, Olga Raggio declares that Gómez-Moreno —whom perhaps she knew from a Spanish trip at the end of the 1950s while serving as an assistant curator at the Metropolitan Museum— had never visited the fortress before the sale of its marbles and knew the reliefs “only from photographs”.¹³ Apart from the images included in the article by Espín (in part republished by Lampérez y Romea),¹⁴ Gómez-Moreno could have been aware of some of the shots taken during the negotiations between 1904 and 1910 led at first by Goldberg and then by the dealers that took over the property of the *patio* after 1905¹⁵ [fig. 5]. Maybe Gómez-Moreno, as a specialist in Spanish sculpture, received some of these photos by one of the potential buyers for a requested expertise about the *patio*: for example, in the late summer of 1904, Archer M. Huntington —the founder of the Hispanic Society of America— got a set of photographs by Goldberg, who wanted to solicit with it a possible purchase by the American magnate.¹⁶

Circulated by the merchants who dealt with the sale, none of these images described anyway the former installation of the marbles: in particular, the aforementioned correspondence with

¹² Lampérez y Romea, 1922: I, 288-291 especially 289 fig. 307.

¹³ Raggio, 1964: 176.

¹⁴ Lampérez y Romea, 1922: I, 291 figs. 309-310.

¹⁵ New York, Metropolitan Museum Archives, [from now on MMA], Archives, Office of the Secretary. Correspondence Files 1870-1950. Blumenthal George. Bequest —Patio (and Pipe Organ) 1942-46, 1948-51: letter by Trowbridge & Livingston Architects to George L. Greenway, February 13 1942; MMA, Archives, Office of the Secretary. Correspondence Files 1870-1950. Blumenthal George. Bequest— Patio (and Pipe Organ) 1942-46, 1948-51: interdepartmental *memorandum* to Preston Remington, November 29 1945.

¹⁶ CF, 41.190.482: Blumenthal — notes/correspondence: transcript of a letter by Noemi D’Autez to Archer M. Huntington, August 30 1904. Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 28 mentions a photo of the *patio* requested in 1870.



Fig. 5. A. Giraudon, *Fragment of the castle of Vélez Blanco*, 1904 ca.

Huntington clarifies that the first photos ordered *in situ* by Goldberg in the spring of 1904 weren't successful and couldn't be used to present the work on the market, making his promotional activity more difficult.¹⁷

A similar lack of understanding for the primitive state of the courtyard and its insertion in the irregular plan of Vélez Blanco castle wasn't clarified by recent studies: on the contrary, the absence of visual testimonies left open various hypotheses, without leading to definitive conclusions.¹⁸

One of the most important discoveries in furnishing additional information towards recreating the patio's original appearance was the publication by Alfonso Ruiz García of some drawings of the fortress, dating back to XVIII and XIX century, kept among the papers of the Archivo General Fundación Casa de Medina Sidonia (Sanlúcar de Barrameda) and—in copy— between the documentation of the Instituto Cartográfico de Andalucía.¹⁹ This group of drawings includes an elevation of the south side of the castle (outlined on a sheet who, on its reverse, shows the watchtower of the fortress with its drawbridge)²⁰ as well as some

tachograph sketches attributed by the inventory of the Archivo in Sanlúcar to the Marquis of Miraflores (possibly Manuel Pando Fernández de Pinedo) and dated to 1859²¹ [figs. 6-8]. The first drawing does not offer a look on the *patio*; instead, some sheets among those of the second group present schematic views of three fronts of the courtyard, i.e. south, east and west sides. Despite their documentary value, these sketches are fragmentary in nature and their hasty handling do not explain how the system of arches, balustrades, friezes and windows were inserted in the fortress; their rather advanced chronology also suggests that they recorded a deteriorated state, a consequence of decades of abandonment.²² Even other images discovered in more recent years do not add further information.²³

For these reasons, the appearance of a new drawing of the courtyard is extremely valuable in reconstructing the courtyard's original structure. The drawing dates back to the early XIX century [fig. 9], when, in other words, the marble elements at the Met still furnished the castle: around this drawing, it is possible to reorganize a very dense documentary history, useful in providing new details on the *patio*.

The sheet [fig. 9] is preserved in the Archivo Casa de Medina Sidonia in a folder that contains information about the “estado en que se encuentra el Castillo de Vélez Blanco 1805-1806-

¹⁷ CF, 41, 190.482: Blumenthal — notes/correspondence: transcript of a letter by Noemi D'Autez to Archer M. Huntington, June 23 1904.

¹⁸ Recently Navarro López, 2007; Motos Díaz, 2015.

¹⁹ See Ruiz García, 1999: 114.

²⁰ Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Archivo General de la Fundación Casa Medina Sidonia [from now on AGFMS], 5614. The drawing was first published by Ruiz García, 1999: 114 (this contribution presents just one side of the sheet); the reverse was first published by Roth, 2007: 84.

²¹ AGFMS, 6282. The sketches were first published by Ruiz García, 1999: 114: the contribution just mentions four sketches from the series (composed of eight drawings). The series was republished by Lentisco Puche, 2007: 102.

²² See Ruiz García, 1999: 114; Lentisco Puche, 2007: 102; Motos Díaz, 2015: 228, 232 fig. 6.

²³ For example Lentisco Puche, 2007: 96.

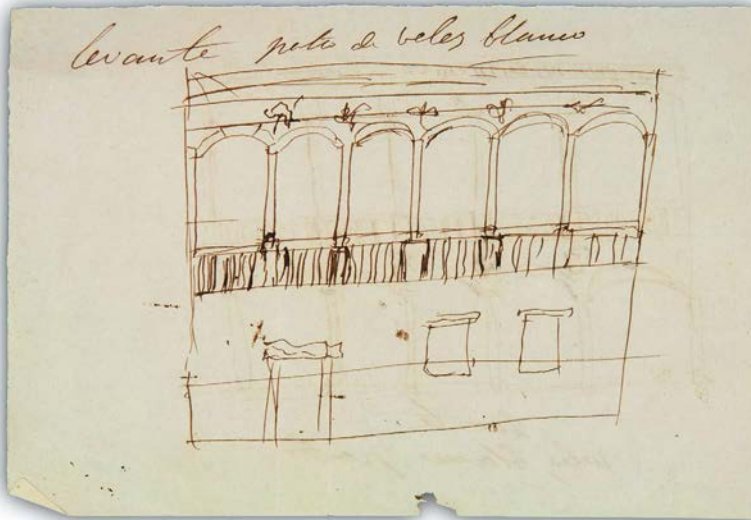


Fig. 6. Marquis of Miraflores (?), *Sketches of the Castle of Vélez Blanco*, 1859 (?) (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Archivo General de la Fundación Casa Medina Sidonia, 6282).

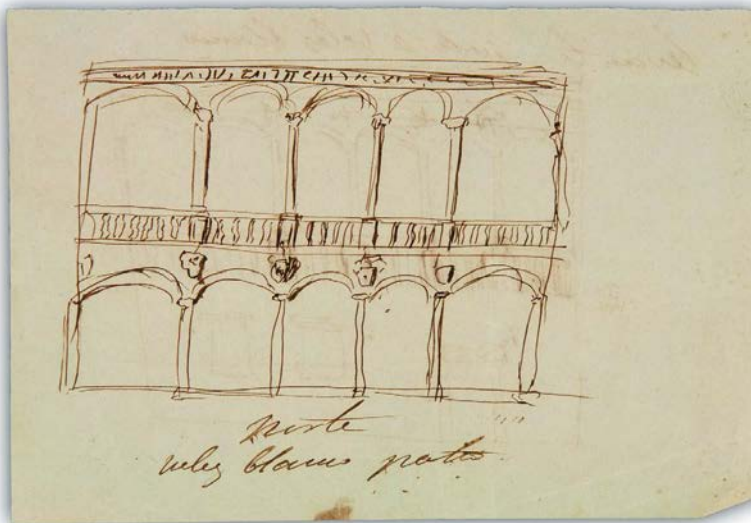


Fig. 7. Marquis of Miraflores (?), *Sketches of the Castle of Vélez Blanco*, 1859 (?) (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Archivo General de la Fundación Casa Medina Sidonia, 6282).

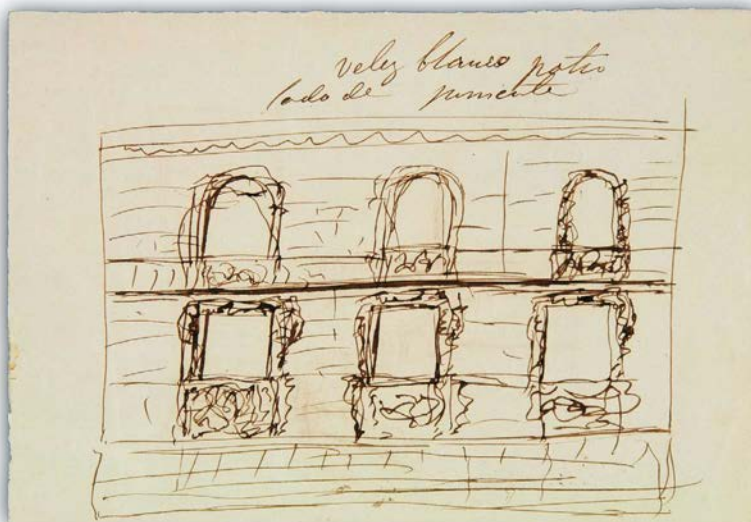


Fig. 8. Marquis of Miraflores (?), *Sketches of the Castle of Vélez Blanco*, 1859 (?) (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Archivo General de la Fundación Casa Medina Sidonia, 6282).

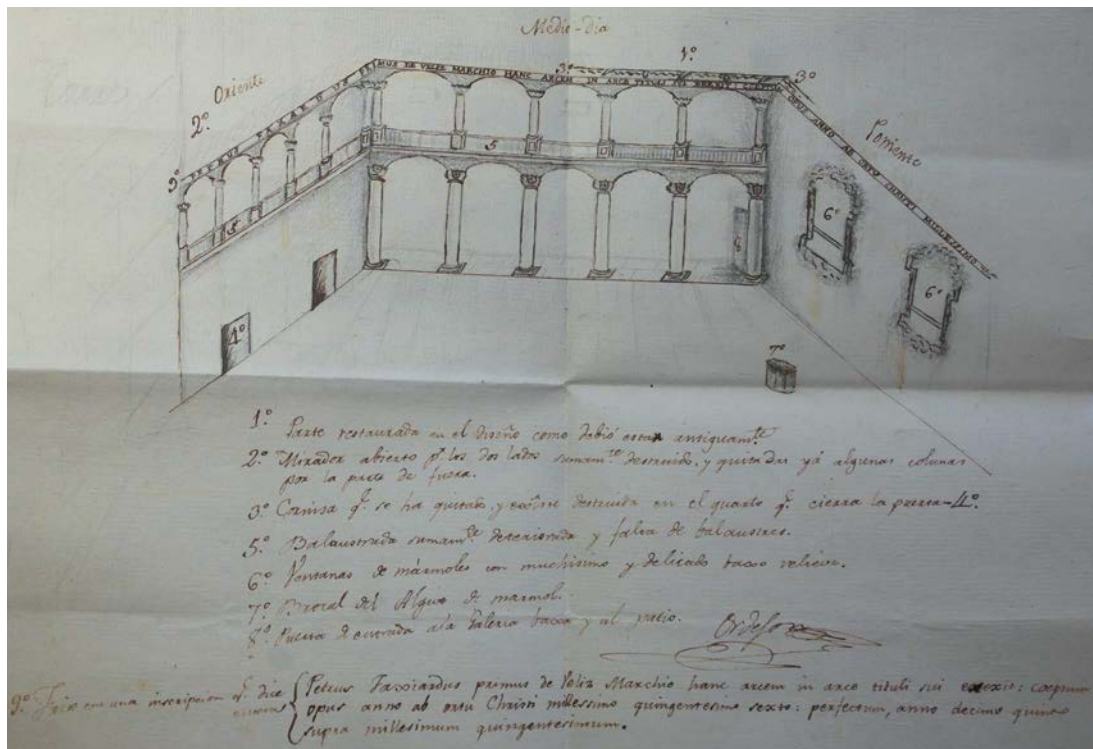


Fig. 9. Ignacio de Ordeson, *View of the patio of the castle of Vélez Blanco*, 1805 (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Archivo General de la Fundación Casa Medina Sidonia, 5696).

1807²⁴. All the papers in the folder report on the conditions of the fortress at the beginning of XIX century and, in fact, describe its structural instability. The group of documents containing the drawing can be traced to an inspection campaign carried out in Vélez Blanco at the beginning of the century: from these same documents it is possible to determine that the XII Marquis of Los Vélez and XVI Duke of Medina Sidonia, Francisco de Borja Álvarez de Toledo Osorio (1763-1821), had never before visited the place.²⁵ This was not necessarily surprising, given the site's geographic isolation and the way it entered into his family estate following a marriage celebrated only one century before, in 1683. The castle was in fact incorporated into the possessions of the Marquises of Villafranca through the wedding of José Fadrique de Toledo Osorio, Córdoba y Cardona (Francisco's great-great grandfather) with Catalina de Moncada Aragón y Fajardo, daughter of María Teresa Fajardo.²⁶

These hereditary circumstances, together with the isolated location of the castle, explain for themselves how the XII Marquis of los Vélez could not have an exact knowledge of the fortress, located in the eastern end of Andalusia:²⁷ the Toledo had its own principal feud in Villafranca del Bierzo in the León province.

According to the documents in Sanlúcar, the Marquis focused his attention on the castle at the end of the winter 1805 thanks to an expression of concern launched by Francisco Ignacio de Taranco, "administrador general" of the *pueblos* of Vélez Blanco and Vélez Rubio.²⁸ The cost

²⁴ AGFMS, 5696.

²⁵ Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009.

²⁶ See Ruiz García, 1999: 104. See also Tapia Garrido, 1981: 233-236.

²⁷ For a *résumé* see Fernández Vázquez, 2007: 35-42.

²⁸ Letter by Francisco Ignacio de Taranco to the Marquis of Villafranca, March 11 180; AGFMS, 5696. On Taranco see Corbalán, 2014: 58, 64, 67-68.

estimate, dated March 8 and intended to be sent to the Marquis, reports in first person the opinion of Josef Moreno Sánchez, “maestro de Obras y vecino de la villa de Belez Rubio”, who was sent to the fortress by the administrator “al reconocimiento del Castillo de Belez Blanco”; he had noticed a series of conspicuous damages, especially in the area of the courtyard, around the columns and the arches, that could create serious structural risks.²⁹

This warning could not have been surprising considering the many alarms about the building that had occurred over the prior decades. Already in 1699 the precarious state of its spaces being used as a prison was reported by the *alcalde mayor* of Vélez Blanco, requiring substantial repairs;³⁰ new attentions were focused on these rooms in February 1748 by Pedro Ignacio Portillo, *administrador general*, who was frightened by the possibility of easy evasions.³¹

Moreover, in September 1722, Pedro de Casanova, “gobernador general de Los Vélez”,³² had mentioned that “uno de los Corredores prinzipales de este Castillo àmenazaba ruina”, i.e. “el Corredor que haze frente ala sala que llaman el Triunfo.”³³ For this reason, again in October, he would have called for an immediate intervention.³⁴ The aforementioned Portillo, in June 1738, made entreaties for substantial funding from Fadrique Vicente Álvarez de Toledo Osorio, then holder of the title of Marquis of Villafranca and Marquis of Los Vélez:

“en el castillo debo decir que si se ubiera de reparar segun necesita ni con treinta mil reales se podria hacer pero lo que mas falta le hare es el rebararlo todo de proa a popa pues el agua como llueve cae dentro y la mayor parte de las maderas son podridas; por lo que mira a los texados de plomo con el gran peso de sus texas estan todos agoriados y las maderas como son viexas y medio podridas me temo una desgracia”³⁵.

To make things worse, a violent earthquake struck the region on March 4, 1751 and, as a consequence, “todo el Castillo y en particular sus corredores y galerias [...] amenaza[ba]n una fatal ruina”. In particular, the stability of one of the galleries appeared to be impaired, together with the corresponding “varandilla de piedra en la parte que cae al patio”.³⁶ These breakages were buffered by the following winter. Nevertheless in 1761 Pedro Martínez Tauste, “criado de Velez [...], portero en el castillo”, could announce that “un arco de ladrillo en la misma facha que es el que mantiene las columnas de los coredores que caen al patio” was very deteriorated, risking to ruin “de lado [...] sobre la techumbre” of the “escalera”. Some attempts were made to repair these further failures; however conflicting opinions were expressed about the solutions to be taken.³⁷ In the meantime, beginning from 1754, the decision was made to restore the bridge of the castle, i.e. a “pasaizo de cuarterones con tablazon”, that should have been replaced by a “puente formal”.³⁸

With respect to these signs of degradation, it is not surprising that Josef Moreno Sánchez’ inspection had found in 1805 an aggravated situation, perhaps worsened by yet two other earthquakes that occurred in the same area the previous year,³⁹ and it does not come as a surprise that

²⁹ Estimate of the work to be done in the castle of Vélez Blanco drawn up by Josef Moreno Sánchez in Vélez Rubio, May 8 1805; AGFMS, 5696.

³⁰ AGFMS, 5976.

³¹ AGFMS, 5978.

³² On the Casanova family see Roth, 2012.

³³ AGFMS, 1402.

³⁴ AGFMS, 1402.

³⁵ AGFMS, 5953.

³⁶ AGFMS, 1281. See also Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 20-22: this contribution underlines that the most affected part of the castle was one of the gallery of the *patio*, “porque toda está vencida y como estriba sólo en columnas y arcos”.

³⁷ AGFMS, 1892. See Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 22-23.

³⁸ AGFMS, 5980. In 1657 the bridge was still in good condition see Roth, 2007.

³⁹ Three major earthquakes affected the region in March 1751, in January 1804 and then again in August 1804, see http://iagpds.ugr.es/pages/informacion_divulgacion/sismos_superior_vii.

he proposed to occlude the lights of the arches with walls of support (opening in them “*algunas ventanas*”) as a definitive solution to the problem.⁴⁰

However, such a suggestion elicited resistance. Taranco, *administrador general* of the House of Villafranca in Vélez Rubio, was the first to react. Directly addressing the Marquis on March 11 of the same year, he wanted to clarify just how much the procedure proposed by Moreno Sánchez would have achieved “*el fin de la seguridad del edificio*”, at the same time depriving it “*de una gran parte del merito q(u)e tiene*”, i.e. the beauty of its architectural decoration, that despite having suffered “*en otros tiempos quebrantos*” had been restored until then “*con mucha delicadeza*”. On the other hand, Taranco believed that in the area of Vélez Blanco there was no such a “*maestro a quien se pueda confiar la execucion de asegurar dichos corredores sin deformidad alguna*”.⁴¹

These objections were followed by Caietano Martínez Cosío, *alcalde mayor* of Vélez Blanco, who was called into question by Taranco: writing to the Marquis about this previous message (forwarded with his own letter), the *alcalde* highlighted how “*pudiendo encontrarse en aquellas remediaciones un artifice inteligente podria muy bien reparar el quebranto con igual seguridad y ninguna deformid(a)d ni ocultacion del orden de arquitectura*”.⁴² When the message by Martínez Cosío was delivered, the Marquis took the decision to follow this latter suggestion. His resolution was communicated to Taranco on April 15, along with the request to fulfill “*las oportunas dilig(encia)s en buscar un buen artifice q(u)e haga dicha reparac(io)n sin marizar los huecos de entre columna y columna*”.⁴³

The correspondence then continues with a long report sent by Ignacio de Ordeson, “*humilde criado*” of the Marquis;⁴⁴ it is during this phase in which the aforementioned drawing is to be placed. In fact, writing from Vélez Rubio on May 27, Ordeson communicated the results of his inspection, together with “*D(on) Juan Ortiz*”, “*inteligente en obras de escultura*” and the person chosen to offer a professional judgment regarding the eventual restoration. For its pragmatic purposes (and therefore its minutely expository and interpretative aims), the report should be considered one of the most scrupulous descriptions of the castle known today. Additionally, Ordeson’s specific interest for the static maintenance of the *patio* throws a more intense light on this area, usually treated as a monumental transit space in documents and literary sources.

For example, the report differs profoundly from the older description composed in 1657 when Don Fernando Joaquín Fajardo visited Vélez Blanco, intended as a description faithful to the traditional scheme of a ‘*visit*’.⁴⁵ Ordeson’s account is also different from the brief note dedicated to the castle and contained in the memoir of the journey to Vélez Rubio, made in 1769-70 by Don Antonio Álvarez de Toledo for the inauguration of the new church of the Encarnación.⁴⁶

It is significant that Ordeson’s report starts commenting on the surviving bulwarks around the actual fortress: “*Existe [...] solam(en)te el centro de la Fortaleza, esto es la casa-palacio, mas no la muralla y contra muralla q(u)e parece hubo, y solo quedan de estos ultimos asilos algunas paredes de una solidez asombrosa [...]. Para pasar desde aqui al Palacio havia un puente levadizo, q(u)e [...] se ha hecho fixo*”. Underlining the poor conditions of this last structure (and mentioning the “*formidable puerta pequeña de yerro*”),⁴⁷ the report goes on with a scrupulous examination of the marbles in the courtyard, “*los objetos que V. E. quiere conserbar, ya en el estado mas deplorable*”, “*objetos de la mayor estimacion, y propios del Palacio de un Rey*”.

⁴⁰ See note 28.

⁴¹ See note 28.

⁴² Letter by Caietano Martínez Cosío to the Marquis of Villafranca, April 1805; AGFMS, 5696.

⁴³ Letter of the Marquis of Villafranca to Francisco Ignacio de Taranco, April 15 1805; AGFMS, 5696.

⁴⁴ Report by Ignacio de Ordeson to the Marquis of Villafranca, May 27 1805; *résumé* of the report by Ignacio de Ordeson to the Marquis of Villafranca, given on June 13 1805; AGFMS, 5696.

⁴⁵ Roth, 2007.

⁴⁶ See *El señor en sus estados*, 2006: 90.

⁴⁷ This reference should not be linked to the door published in Raggio, 1968: 234 nota 6, fig. 5 but to the gateway, mentioned in 1657 as “*de planchas de hierro*”; see Roth, 2007.

The irrepressible wonder in tone and language can be considered the most singular quality of the text; and even if it can't be excluded that such an amazement was not the by-product of a certain flattery, it really animates the subsequent eulogy of the building: "El deseo de ejecutar este informe con exactitud, y al mismo t(ie)m(p)o la admiracion q(u)e me causó el verme dentro de un edificio de aquella naturaleza, en q(u)e un ilustre ascend(en)te de V. E. reunió el gusto y delicadeza a su defensa y seguridad contra la invasion de enemigos, me hizo examinar muy por menor todas las piezas de la fortaleza-palacio". Even from the lexical point of view, Ordeson shows his surprise: in fact he proves to be undecided in the use of the terms "castillo", "fortaleza", "casa" and "palacio". This continuous slippage is a further proof of the difficulty encountered by the author in offering the Marquis an exact idea of the place. Also for this reason, Ordeson decides to resort to the graphic tool to present a clear image of the courtyard: "Para que V. E. se haga cargo he formado, aunque de prisa, el diseño adjunto, imitando en lo posible el or(de)n de arquitectura de este patio, formado por cuatro lados tan diversos entre sí que ninguno parece haberse hecho p(ar)a el otro"; and this last indication must be connected to the different compositional grids that organize each of the fronts of the courtyard since their erection at the beginning of the XVI century.

The legend associated with the drawing inscribed in the lower section of the sheet agrees with the report, partly integrating and partly clarifying its text. Ordeson's summary describes the courtyard side by side: it only leaves out the one, corresponding to the "altísima torre del castillo", i.e. the *torre del homenaje*.⁴⁸ Starting from the west front, the report underlines its ruinous state ("amenaza próxima ruina") and indicates how it was decorated by "dos ventanas de baso relieves".

Notwithstanding its clumsy rendering of details, the sketch clarifies that the windows were structured on two levels, separated by a protruding molding. This shape coincides with the organization of the marble frames today at the Met (which however, in part, are enlarged with modern elements) and also corresponds to the ones drawn on the later watercolor executed around 1904. This last sheet, which cuts the west wall, documents on that side only a couple of double windows: it apparently confirms Ordeson's declaration, which is instead contradicted by visual and textual documents preceding the watercolor and subsequent to the 1805 report. This circumstance opens the question as to the original arrangement of the *patio* and on a possible relocation of the third frame as exhibited in New York (and already present in the Blumenthal house).⁴⁹ In this regard, it could be useful to remember that, in May 1816, Francisco Sánchez García informed the Marquis—at the request of his wife—about the expenses necessary to transport "hasta la ciudad de Murcia" "cada una de las guarniciones de marmol de las ventanas del castillo de Velez": the message attests to the special appreciation for these decorative elements and their consequent, possible mobility only a few years after Ordeson's report.⁵⁰

The document goes on to describe "el lado del medio día", six columns in the "galería basa", "hermosísimas de un marmol blanco de Genova (o de otra parte) de orden corintio recargado, y muy bien tratadas", "los arcos de medio punto que hay sobre ellas" ("desunidos y quebrantados"). It then it illustrates the upper gallery:

⁴⁸ The report doesn't mention the monumental heraldic shield that must have been on that front of the courtyard; see for example De Motos, 2007: 123.

⁴⁹ The *Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico de España y Portugal* by Sebastián de Miñano mentions "seis ventanas" (a passage that should be read as 'three double windows', considering the peculiar structure of their marble frames). It does not locate them in a precise spot, but it can be supposed that they were already in the courtyard (De Miñano, 1828: 276). One of the sketches possibly by the Marquis of Miraflores and the photos published by Espín Rael show three double windows on the west front; see notes 6, 21. It is significant that the last double window on the left appears much closer to the south side than it is in the drawing by Ordeson. Strangely, the catalogue of the Blumenthal Collection states in 1926 that the courtyard, "in its original construction", "showed [...] an open gallery with superposed arches on two of its sides, while the two others had solid walls with four windows each, equally superposed, the two above showing a richer ornamentation than the ones below and each of them being differently decorated"; Rubinstein-Bloch, 1926 plate LXIX.

⁵⁰ AGFMS, 1766. See also Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 25.



Fig. 10. Olga Raggio, *View of the courtyard of the castle of Vélez Blanco*, 1959 (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Esda Department, Curatorial Files, 41.190.482).

“la balastrada enteram(en)te perdida, de suerte q(u)e faltan la mitad o mas de los balaustres, de los quales se conserban algunos estropezados y vencidos àcia fuera, amenazando prox(i)ma ruina: las columnitas todas mas o menos rotas, abiertas y falta de pedazos en sus chapiteles y pilastras, y algunas rodeadas con faxas de yerro: los arcos q(u)e hay sobre estas, abiertos igualmente y desencasados y rotos en muchos pedazos: el friso en el mismo estado, aunque bien conserbada la letra que hay en el”.⁵¹

The drawing compensates for these losses and gaps; in correspondence with this side and the number “1”, the legend clarifies that the sheet represents this front of the courtyard “como debió estar antiguam(en)te”.

In relation to the “cornisa q(u)e devia coronar todo este orden de arquitectura”, the document describes it as “arrancada y metida en mil pedazos”, stacked “en uno de los quartos del lienzo de Oriente” in which “muchos fragmentos de canelones, figurones de apoyo, triglifos, y otras piezas” could be found. This space is identified by the legend with the number “4”. Significantly, when Olga Raggio visited the castle in the summer of 1959, some marbles were still aligned along this same space, marked by a growing decay [fig. 10]: it can be therefore speculated that they remained

there at least from the XVIII century, probably because —along the years— the decision to restore a decorative element like the cornice wasn’t undertaken by the owners.

The document witnesses an even more compromised situation along the east wall, marked by “averías y daños”, where in addition the cornice is missing. Driven by an archaeological curiosity, the report indicates that in the upper loggia “por la p(ar)te de fuera se han quitado las columnas de marmol, sustituyendo otras de piedra comun”: also, the remaining columns appeared “hendidas de un lado à otro”. The text doesn’t mention their number, but the drawing represents five shafts in addition to the angular one. This is a very important detail, since, given Ordeson’s scruple, it seems possible to exclude an error or a misunderstanding. The Marquis’ agent had gone to the castle to judge the solidity of the arches and therefore he would hardly have failed in his purpose of exactitude.⁵² Confirming the number five is the page dedicated to the castle in the *Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico de España y Portugal*, published by Sebastián de Miñano y Bedoya in 1828, confirms the same situation. The book, in fact, mentions for the lower porch on the “north side” —in reality it is the south front— “cinco columnas” (evidently it combines in one the two half columns on the ends). According to this principle, it counts instead in the upper gallery a total of “10 columnas”, distributed “al oeste y norte del patio”: if five of them corresponded on the south front to those in the lower gallery, the remaining five had to be placed in the other section of the upper gallery.⁵³

⁵¹ These losses in the marble furnishing of the courtyard mostly coincide with the ones reported in 1725 by Pedro Casanova, *alcalde mayor* (Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 14-15), and in 1766, when Antonio de la Torre was appointed “portero del castillo” (AGFMS, 5614). See Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 24-25.

⁵² It is important to underline that the presence of five arches on the east front could have answered, for reasons of symmetry, to the couple of windows on the west wall. I’m grateful to Dario Donetti for this suggestion.

⁵³ De Miñano, 1828: 275-276.

A different structural scheme can be observed in the courtyard's installation at the Met. While the 1904 watercolor cuts the east side, failing to include its entire length, the reconstruction accomplished by the museum at the beginning of the '60s has provided an extra column in the upper gallery of the courtyard (whose development is reversed compared to the original plan). This choice was made both in relationship with the availability of fragments transferred from Blumenthal's house around 1943-44 as well as the architecture of the museum room itself, which was accomplished between 1958 and 1964 to accommodate the structure at the entrance of the Thomas J. Watson Library⁵⁴ [figs. 11-12]. Over the years the reconstruction proposal formulated by Raggio, at that time assistant curator at the Met, found an unexpected confirmation by one of the drawings from the aforementioned series of 1859 [fig. 6]. The sheet dedicated to the eastern front of the *patio* presents six columns (in addition to the angular one) in the upper gallery towards the courtyard.

Although a mistake in the sketch cannot be excluded, one can also hypothesize that some modification of the *patio*'s structure was carried out in the years following Ordeson's visit (but before the execution of the later drawing, usually dated to 1859)⁵⁵ perhaps as a consequence of the ruinous situation highlighted by his report. Moreover, for the details concerning the eastern front, the incongruous calculation of the columns is not the only difference between the two drawings: in fact, the one made in 1805 signals two doors in the lower wall, the later one describes only one gateway, on the left, and a couple of windows, on the right.

It is surely difficult to imagine the original installation of the upper loggia on this side of the courtyard, especially with the relationship between its inner front and the specular porch open towards the *pueblo* of Vélez Blanco just outside of the castle. Considering Ordeson's report and drawing, it can be concluded that in its overall composition the architectural arrangement of the courtyard intended to present a harmonious, balanced structure probably to mask the planimetric asymmetries of the space. This intention was perhaps also translated by the former placing of the epigraph, that according to Ordeson's report, was well preserved in 1805: in fact, although the drawing forces the frieze into an unusual perspectival rendition, it helps imagining the original position of the epigraph and it suggests by the readable transcription of every letter a more expanded arrangement of the words along the four walls. In the sketch the epigraph ends on the west side with "millesimo" (and it starts on the east one with "Petrus"). The drawing then excludes the terminal part of the text, mentioned instead by the legend, i.e. "quingentesimo sexto: perfectum anno decimo quinto supra millesimum quingentesimum". At the same time, since the words in the drawing are arranged along the frieze even in difficult angular joints (an arduous solution for any graphic rendering), it is possible to hypothesize that they were transcribed according to their actual organization in the courtyard, without subjecting the spelling to any simplification. It is also important to remember that the text copied by Ordeson, both in the drawing and its legend, is different from the one presented as original by Raggio in her article⁵⁶ and used for the reconstruction at the Met (i.e. a text identical to the one already assembled in Blumenthal house).⁵⁷ Two sections of the epigraph follow a different order ("primus de veliz marchio"/"marchio de veliz primus" and "anno decimo quinto"/"anno quinto decimo"); the spelling of the Marquis' family name is different ("faxardus-faxiardus"/"fagiardus"),⁵⁸ the text proposed by Ordeson lacks a whole passage, present in Raggio's transcription (i.e. "ac regni murcie quintus prefectus sue prosapie"), while it

⁵⁴ Judging from the plan published in Lampérez y Romea, 1922: I, 289 fig. 307, it is not clear if the *maquette* showed six columns on the east front (while it is evident that it showed five columns on the other wall). Archival evidences suggest that probably the model was executed during the negotiations for the sale of the *patio*; see the *memorandum* written on March 20 1964, now in the ESDA Curatorial Files of the Metropolitan Museum of Art [CF, 41.190.482: Blumenthal — notes/correspondence/provenance].

⁵⁵ See note 21.

⁵⁶ Raggio, 1964: 146.

⁵⁷ Hietikko, 2017.

⁵⁸ The drawing by Ordeson [fig. 9] accepts the spelling "faxardus" in the frieze, while the legend includes the spelling "faxiardus". It should be underlined that in AGFMS, 6282, a transcription of the epigraph is preserved, among the sketches attributed to the Marquis of Miraflores (traditionally dated to 1859). It proposes the versions "fagiardus" and "quinto decimo".



Fig. 11. *Upper gallery of the patio of Vélez Blanco*, 1964, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 41.190.482.

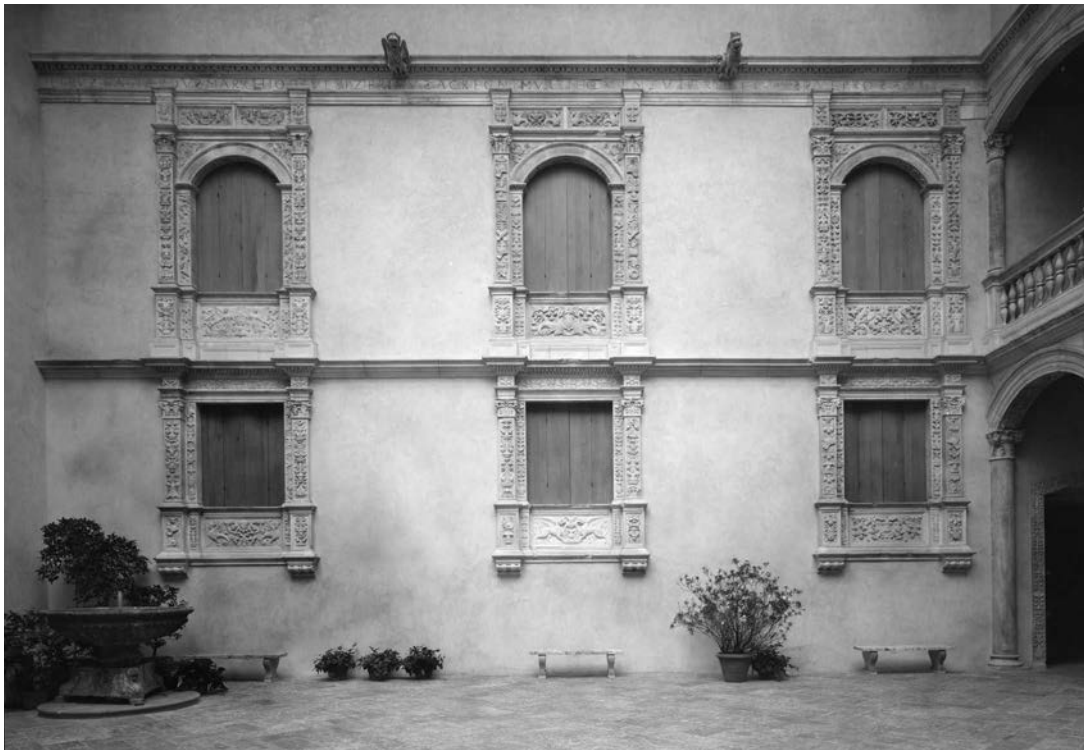


Fig. 12. *Windows of the patio of Vélez Blanco*, 1964, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 41.190.482.

has a possessive adjective missing in the modern recomposition (“tituli sui”/“tituli”). There could be explanations for these discrepancies: for example, Ordeson could have made some mistakes in transcribing the epigraph during his visit. However, it is important that the formula “decimo quinto”, as recorded in the drawing made in 1805 (“perfectum anno decimo quinto supra millesimum quingentesimum”), is more correct than the one proposed by Raggio (“quinto decimo”) and adopted by the Met. At the same time, the “sui” (“tituli sui”) is necessary for the right understanding of the beginning of the epigraph. Perhaps, the text of the frieze was originally consistent with Ordeson’s transcription. If this hypothesis is true, it should then also be concluded that the reference to the “adelanado” of the Murcia Kingdom was added before the sale of the *patio* in 1904. It is in fact unlikely that such a genealogical detail was included in the frieze by the merchants who took care of the commercialization of the marbles.⁵⁹

The presence of the well on the lower right coincides with the 1904 sketch. The legend mentions a “brocol [...] de marmol”. This indication supports the recognition of the original one with the artefact today stored in a private house of Vélez Blanco.⁶⁰

Very attentive to the artistic treasures of the fortress, the report describes “algunas de las piezas del castillo [...] adornadas de artonados soberbios y de magnificos frisos de alto relieve sobre maderas”: these reliefs can be recognized in the ones discovered at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris during the 1990s but purchased by Emile Peyre around 1903. Ordeson especially praises the one “llamado el del Triunfo, [...] un friso Romano” with “millon(e)s de figuras”: he also underlines that, together with the others, in 1805 it appeared “caído ya à pedazos”.⁶¹

Other architectural elements needed an immediate intervention: for example “el “simple texado q(u)e descansa sobre el friso”, used to replace the “cubierta de plomo” that had been removed from the south front with deleterious effects for the stability of the porch. Against the opinion expressed by Josef Moreno Sánchez, the Marquis’ agent suggests at the end of his report:

“Sobre esto no me atrebo a arriesgar mi parecer en el particular. Veo en efecto en el Palacio cosas dignas de la grandeza de V. E.: las seis columnas grandes, y muchas de las pequeñas, y ademas un gran numero de lapidas de marmol de magnitud extraordin(ari)a, q(u)e se hallan en los pavimentos, serian seguram(en)te en Madrid objetos de la mayor estimacion, y propios del Palacio de un Rey; y nada perdería el que V. E. tiene en Velez Blanco en carecer de ellos, pues este lo que necesita en rigor es una solida compostura para mantenerle en pié y q(u)e sirva; y seguram(en)te gastando en èl oportunamente y con el objeto de su solidez, algunas cantidades en la actualidad, podría hacerse eterno”.

Judging by the subsequent history of the castle, it can be excluded that such an expensive campaign was ever undertaken.⁶² However, it is not possible to determine through documents whether more localized interventions were then or later accomplished. After Ordeson’s visit, some alterations to the *patio* likely had to be executed. As has been discussed, changes were probably made to the number of windows on its west front, the text of the epigraph, and the architectural organization of the upper porch on the east side, whose plan could have been modified during the first half of the XIX century. Without any archival evidence, these changes can only be supposed through the comparison of disparate visual sources: notwithstanding, one can surmise that Ordeson’s alarm expressed in 1805 drove the Marquis of Villafranca to consolidate the fortress with the intention of maintaining its stability and picturesque charm.

At any rate the little information we have about the years immediately subsequent to Francisco de Borja’s death witness the building falling into a deep oblivion.⁶³ A new report, written in 1891 by Lorenzo López for the Duke of Medina Sidonia, José Joaquín Álvarez de Toledo,

⁵⁹ In AGFMS, 6282, the transcription of the epigraph among the sketches attributed to the Marquis of Miraflores already shows the reference to the title; see note 59.

⁶⁰ Lentisco Puche, 2007: 114.

⁶¹ Blanc, 1997; 1999.

⁶² Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 25-29.

⁶³ Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 27.

describes the castle as “ruinoso y cada día mas en peligro”. Indeed, López also adds: “para repararlo le necesita muchísimo dinero, y sin resultado alguno. El estado no puede ser peor”.⁶⁴ In fact the photos published by Espín Rael show that, at a time that it is difficult to define, the decision was undertaken to partially dab the arches, contradicting Ordeson’s thoughtful suggestions.⁶⁵

Despite these circumstances, it is possible to affirm that under the regency of Francisco de Borja the fortress lived its last moment of political and cultural relevance. Francisco, engaged in military life from a young age, played a very central role during the armed resistance against the French domination. In May 1808, he escaped the Napoleonic occupation of Madrid, suddenly moving to Andalusia with his wife, María Tomasa de Palafox (1780-1835). The pair first settled in Murcia and then in Alicante. Francisco therefore chose to participate in the political life of the region, an attempt to organize a force of opposition to the Bonapartist hegemony. He took the post of *Comandante General* and *Gobernador* of the Murcia Kingdom and he attended the Cortes de Cádiz for the Junta Superior de Observación y Defensa de Murcia. At the same time, he claimed for himself as a preferential one the title of Marquis of Los Vélez, tying his presence in Andalusia to the fortified image of the ancient castle.⁶⁶

This claim had a clear symbolic value: once an outpost of the *Reconquista*, the citadel could now be seen as a bulwark against the foreign invasion and its illegitimate government.⁶⁷

However, it cannot be excluded that referring by his title to the tradition of Los Vélez, the Marquis also wanted to stress his bond to the artistic heritage of the castle, from the furnishing of the salons to the monumental *patio* with its galleries, columns, arches and reliefs: a shelter against Andalusian sun and a relief from the harsh trials imposed to the Iberian peninsula by the disasters of war; a dynastic heritage to be protected and safeguarded.⁶⁸

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⁶⁴ AGFMS, 5977.

⁶⁵ In addition to the photos published in Espín Rael, 1904: infra pp. 134-135, another shot is preserved in the ESDA Curatorial Files of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (CF, 41.190.482, Vélez Blanco Castle), coming probably from the same campaign; see Rubio de la Serna, 1903-1905: p. 541. It presents another view of the south front of the courtyard, showing the buffered arches of those porches.

⁶⁶ See Ruz, 1996: 56. For a short biography see Fernández Vázquez, 2007: 94-95. See also Vera Nicolás 2012. Su Tomasa de Palafox see Espigado Tocino, 2009.

⁶⁷ For the military relevance of the castle during the French occupation see González Castaño, 2009. See also Tapia Garrido, 1981: 271-279.

⁶⁸ On the damages during the French occupation see Palanques Ayén, 2008; Lentisco Puche/Roth, 2009: 27.

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