

# HERITAGE 2018

Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
on Heritage and Sustainable Development  
10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

## VOLUME 1

**Edited by**

**Rogério Amoêda**

**Sérgio Lira**

**Cristina Pinheiro**

**Juan M. Santiago Zaragoza**

**Julio Calvo Serrano**

**Fabián García Carrillo**



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for sustainable development

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## The interventions of Alejandro Ferrant in the Roman amphitheatre of Tarragona

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**ABSTRACT:** The appearance of Tarragona's monumental complex of the Roman amphitheatre changed significantly between 1967 and 1973. Alejandro Ferrant, architect of the *Brigadas del Patrimonio Artístico Nacional* (Brigades of National Artistic Heritage) of the Spanish government, directed the reconstruction works of an important part of the grandstands, using materials that, over time, have been mimicked/confused with the original structures. The intention seemed to be to restore the original grandeur of the building, although the works focused on the middle sector of the grandstands (*media cavea*), and only a short section of the upper sector (*summa cavea*) was reproduced, causing the amphitheatre to be perceived small compared to its original volume. More than 40 years have passed since the works were carried out; the image resulting from Ferrant's intervention is part of city's urban landscape: there are photographs of official tourist promotion in which almost only the reconstructed parts of the amphitheatre are shown. It is usual that not even the inhabitants of Tarragona know that most of what they see, as well as the seats they use in the events that the building hosts, are a recreation less than half a century old. At a scientific level, Ferrant's interventions are known, but as time goes by it is increasingly difficult to distinguish exactly where they start and end, because constructive techniques were used that, with the patina that gives time, in some areas are visually almost identical to the originals. The examination of the documentation of the archives of the architect, stored and catalogued in the Valencian Library and the delegation of Lleida of the Architects' Association, has allowed us to establish precisely the limits of Ferrant's interventions and provide a detailed chronology of the works.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The original building of the roman Amphitheatre of Tarragona had been the object of numerous and profound architectonic transformations. Shortly after the roman era, the insertion of a Visigoth basilica, as well as the superposition of a Romanesque church which would eventually evolve into a convent. Until the late 18th century, the convent alternated its religious function with that of a military encampment that existed during different periods of warfare due to its strategic location outside of the city and near the shore. Furthermore, during the 19th century the site hosted a prison. At the beginning of the 20th century the convent / barracks / prison / contemporary structures were removed in order to recover the Romanesque church, with unfortunate results: its structure collapsed. The entire area was excavated to the original level of the amphitheatre arena in the early 60s. These interventions brought to light the Visigoth basilica of the late 6th century, over which the aforementioned Romanesque church was built during the mid-12th century (TED'A, 1990)(Ciurana et al. 2013). From this point began the works to which we dedicate this paper.

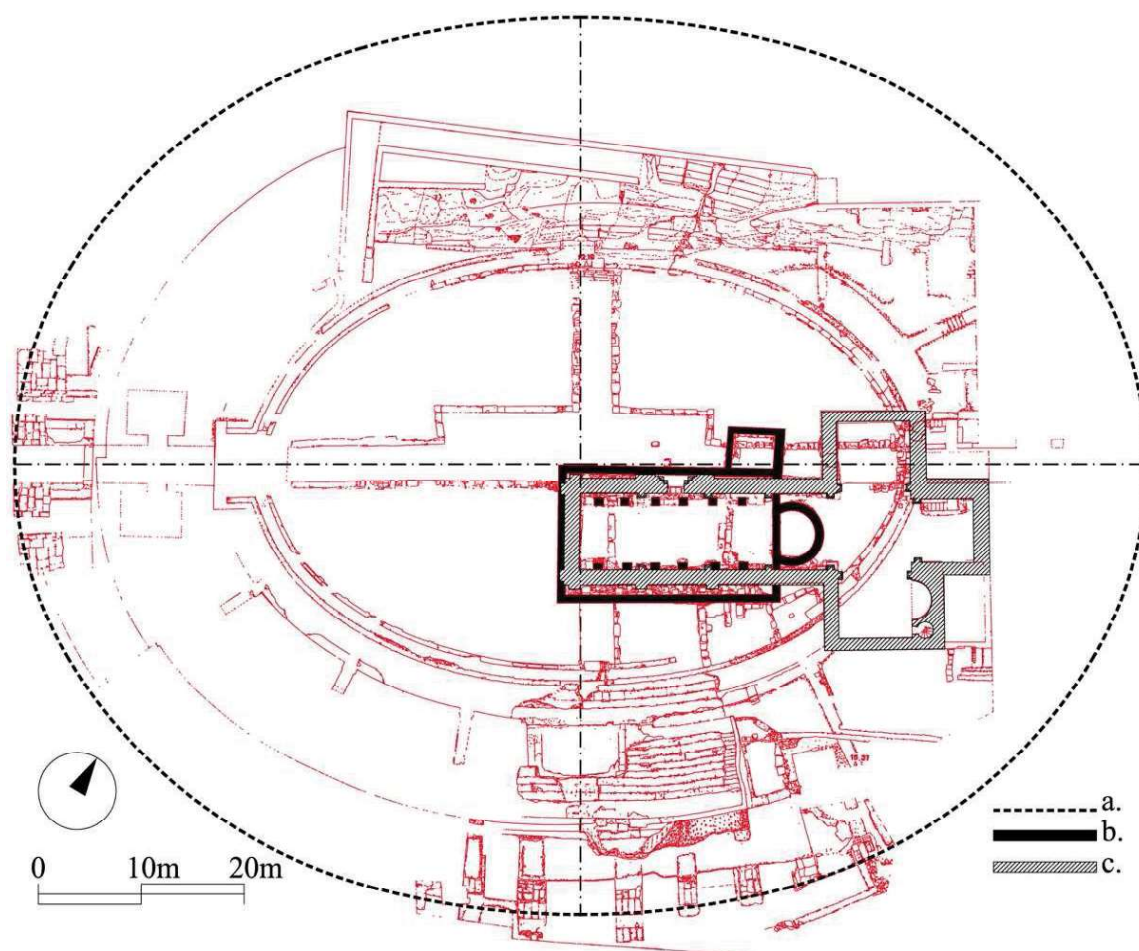


Figure 1. Situation plan of the Tarragona's amphitheatre monumental complex. The perimeter of the roman building (a), the Visigoth basilica (b) and the Romanesque church (c).

The architect Alejandro Ferrant directed the reconstruction works of the amphitheatre of Tarragona between 1967 and 1973 after extensive previous experience in interventions on historic buildings. In July 1929 Alejandro Ferrant was appointed architect-archeologist of the Spanish *Brigadas del Patrimonio Artístico Nacional* (Brigades of National Artistic Heritage). During his first years in the Brigades he already completed different works: The Romanesque church of San Pedro de la Nave, the monasteries of Santa María la Real in Aguilar de Campoo (Palencia) and San Marcos (León), the *Colegiata* of Santa María la Mayor in Toro and several Mudejar buildings. After the revolution of Asturias in 1934, he took part in the reconstruction of the 'Holy Chamber' in the Cathedral of Oviedo (Solà-Morales, et al. 2012).

Ferrant stayed in Madrid after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, a city controlled by the Republican faction. He collaborated with the *Junta de incautación y Protección del Patrimonio Artístico* (Board of Seizure and Protection of Artistic Heritage). At the end of the war, with the victory of the Nationalist faction, was expedited and transferred to the eastern zone (Balearic Islands, Catalonia and Valencia) (García Cueto 2008). He held the position of Architect of the National Artistic Heritage Defence Service between 1942 and 1975, working in a large number of restorations of monuments in Catalonia: Sant Vicenç in Cardona, Santa Maria del Mar and Sant Pau del Camp in Barcelona, La Seu Vella of Lleida, the church of Taüll and the Roman buildings of Tarragona.

In Tarragona, between 1967 and 1973, Alejandro Ferrant directed the reconstruction of part of the grandstands of the Roman Amphitheatre, works that were accompanied by archaeological surveys. To study the chronology of the interventions we have examined the documentation of the archives of the architect, stored and catalogued in the delegation of Lleida of the Architects' Association of Catalonia and in the Valencian Library. We have also compiled the news



appeared in the local press to compare the execution dates of the different constructive phases that are deduced from examining the documentation of the architect.

## 2 ARCHIVE OF LLEIDA

In the Ferrant's Archive of the Lleida demarcation of the *Col·legid'Arquitectes de Catalunya* (Architects' Association of Catalonia) we have located different images of the reconstruction of the grandstands. The archive is exclusively composed of black and white photographic negatives. Part of the documents are scanned, and the resulting digital files are classified by geographical areas. There are also two typed lists to classify the envelopes where the negatives are stored, indicating the places where the images were captured. These two listings are not identical. We explain this to show that the archive does not present an exhaustive, unique and reliable classification and, given the prolific photo collection of Ferrant, it is difficult to ensure that the 8 images found are the only ones in the archive. In fact, as we will see later, in the Alejandro Ferrant Archive of Valencia (we will call it with the abbreviation used by the archive itself: AAFV), among the documentation of the architect regarding the different phases of the Amphitheatre's works, we have located some of the 9 images of Lleida printed on paper, but also other photographs with annotations on the back written by architect himself.

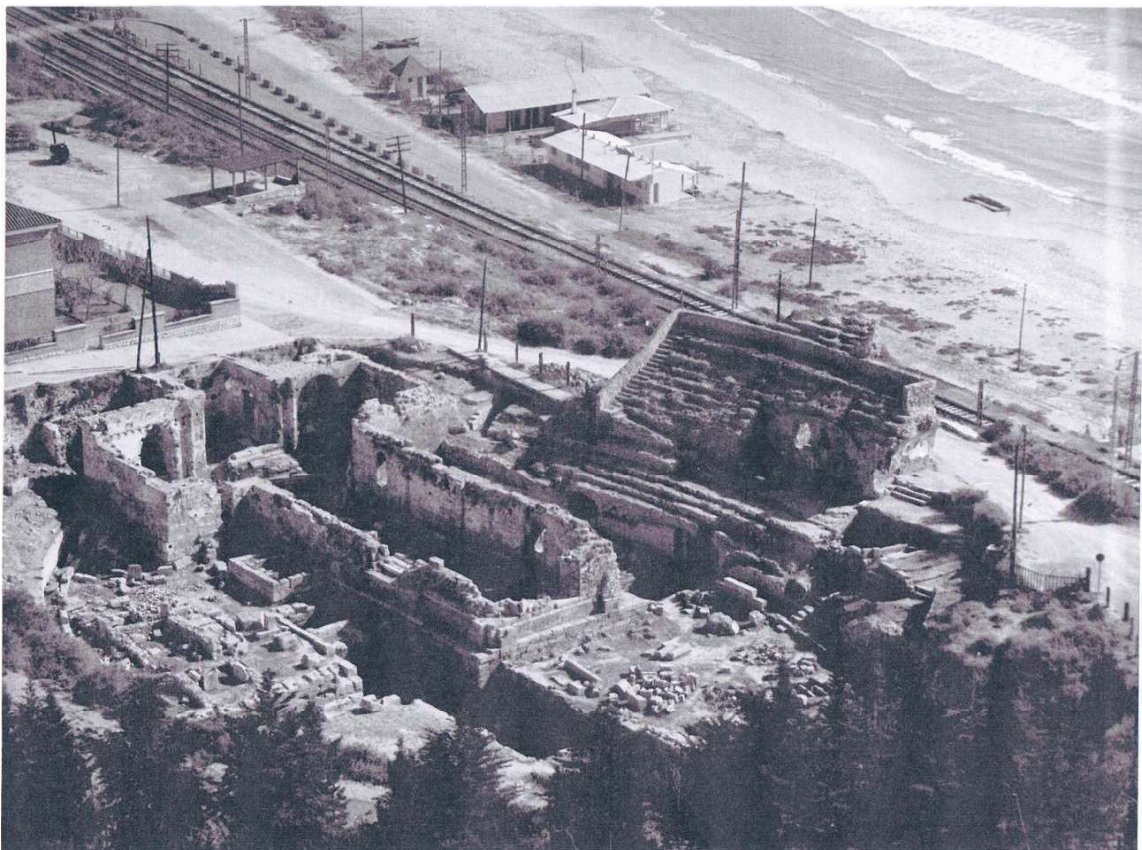


Figure 2. Aerial view of the complex, by 1962. Image take by Tarragona's photographer Raymond (AAFV, uncatalogued image).

Returning to the Lleida archive, we have only located, between the lists and the CDs where the scanned images are archived, two general views of the reconstruction works of the grandstands, both corresponding to the final phases of work. Examining the original negatives, we have located the remaining 7 images. They correspond to the initial stages, during the

previous cleaning and clearing work, and are very useful to distinguish the original structures of the reconstructions executed, which, due to an eagerness of mimicry in the constructive solutions adopted, make it difficult today the archaeological interpretation of the treated sectors.

The documentation found in Lleida, despite its high quality, can be described as scarce and still awaiting a good archival treatment. In Valencia (AAFV) it has happened just the opposite: it is very abundant and is very well ordered, stored in a series of folders with a reference for all its content or, as with some plans, classified individually. With some exception: there is a folder entitled *ANFITEATRO FOTOS*, without cataloguing, plenty of photographs. However, it has been very useful to us since many are dated on the reverse, by hand or with a tampon, it seems that by the architect himself or the staff of his office.



Figure 3. Initial stages of the works directed by Alejandro Ferrant. Northwest view of the complex, from de top of the meridional grandstands. Ferrant archive of the *Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya* (COAC), negative catalogued with the number 51\_001. Also exist a copy on paper at the AAFV dated januray 26, 1968.

### 3 ARCHIVE OF VALENCIA

#### 3.1 AAFV 947 Works of initial enclosure of excavations (Ferrant 1962)

We start the analysis of the documentation of the AAFV with the folder 947 (Ferrant, 1962). It is part of a project that contemplates executing a fence for the site and some excavations that had to continue those that Samuel Ventura had directed with the sponsorship of the Bryant Foundation and, according to Ferrant himself, with the collaboration of the architect Salvador Ripoll. The documentation provides a constructive description of the fence, but this folder does not include plans or constructive details.

We can find a possible layout of the enclosure fence in 1/500 scale plan from the AAVV 958 folder. It is entitled *Planta situación de perfiles* (plant of the situation of the profiles) and has no date or signature. The different inflections of the contour of the enclosure are marked with



letters. This map is interesting especially for the layout of the profiles: radial lines that converge on the south side of the Romanesque church, that are also marked with letters. It seems that this is a stakeout to make sections, because we find abundant levels on radial lines with the same guidelines on the topographic map at 1/100 scale of the AAVV 958 folder. The name of the author of the map or who ordered it is not indicated, but appears a date: June 1959. It covers the entire enclosure of the Amphitheatre and shows a general state that is very similar to the one we can see in the model devoted to the excavations of Samuel Ventura, currently exhibited in the main hall of the Tarragona headquarters of the National Archaeological Museum. We recall that these excavations were completed in 1957, so the chronology is congruent.

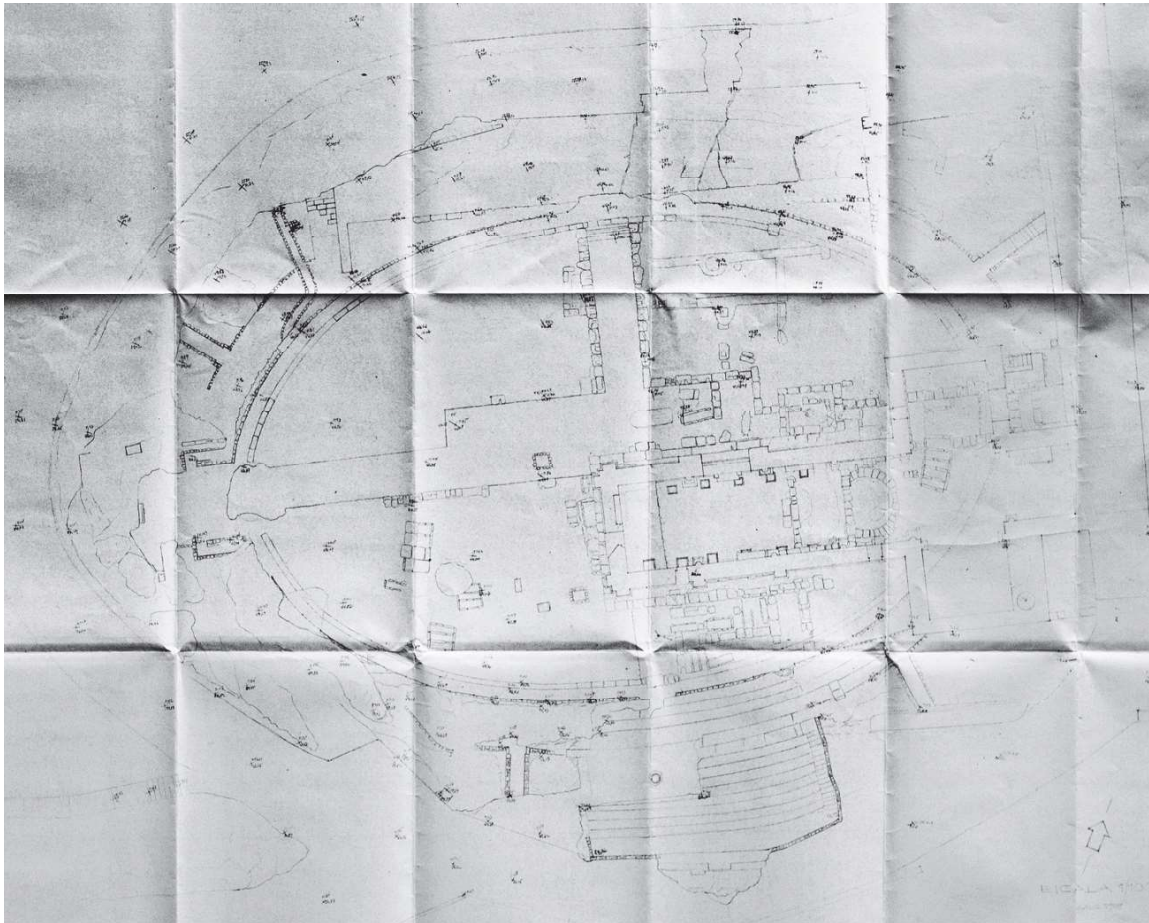


Figure 4. Topographic map at 1/100 scale of the AAVV 958 folder, dated June 1959, probably drawn by the architect Salvador Ripoll for the excavations directed by Samuel Ventura.

### 3.2 AAFV 948 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1963)

In the folder AAFV 948 (Ferrant, 1963) the architect proposes the "consolidation of those walls that due to their leaning, caused by the disintegration of the materials, threaten to collapse", among which mention the "walls of the churches" and the "access corridors to the *cavea*". We do not know exactly which corridors it refers to, possibly the supporting vaults of the southern grandstands, and also the openings to the arena from the lower steps of this grandstands. Ferrant also proposes emptying the fillet up vaults to find "the possible drainage of the *arena*", as well as order the remains dispersed on the *arena* and start the reconstruction of the *podium*.

### 3.3 AAFV 949 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1964)

In folder AAFV 949 (Ferrant, 1964) the architect refers to the discovery, the previous year, of the *arena*'s drainage gallery that he proposed to look for in the previous document. He plans to

continue the work with "a voluminous ground movement that exposes the whole remains of the monumental Roman construction, that is, what constituted its main façade to the sea." He explains that in the area where he plans to excavate there are huge construction elements formed by detachments from the walls and the support vaults of the *cavea*, a situation that he interprets as the result of a blast. In the writings we also find a first reference to the reconstructive intentions of the architect: "It is necessary to complete, with a clear phase differentiation, some ruined vault or wall, in order to achieve a greater sense of grandeur of the original monument".



Figure 5. Two photographs of the seaside façade of the southern grandstands. At left dated february 29, 1964; at right april 16, 1964 (AAFV, uncatalogued images).

### 3.4 AAFV 950 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1967)

In folder AAFV (Ferrant, 1967) the architect expressed his desire to complete the ground movements that began in 1962. He believes that this way "will allow to find what of the constructions that elliptically were raised around the arena remains in good conditions or, at least, with possibilities of consolidation or reconstruction". He proposes to start the works from the southwest and again mentions the reconstruction of the podium.

### 3.5 AAFV 951 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1967)

In the folder AAFV 951 (Ferrant, 1967) the architect gives news of the discovery, the previous year, of the west monumental door, where it had been excavated to the level of the pavement visible today, which he says that "penetrates the major axis of the ellipse". He manifests the will to complete the excavations of 1967. A not catalogued image from the AAFV, dated slightly later in the reverse (April 14, 1969), offers us a general panoramic of the state of the monumental complex. It is framed from the west end, approximately where now passes the Bryant Road. In the foreground we see the gallery of the west door completely excavated, on the left the tiers carved in the rock, then already free of vegetation. In the southwest quadrant of the stands the only reconstruction was the lower part of the walls of the *media cavea*.





Figure 6. General view of the monumental complex from the west, dated in the reverse side April 14, 1969 (AAFV, uncatalogued image).

### 3.6 AAFV 952 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1969)

In the folder AAFV 952 (Ferrant, 1969) the architect explains the last excavations that had been executed, between the west gate and the southern grandstands. He mentions a possible reconstruction of the *podium* with bricks, to allow him to differentiate well the original parts. This desire to distinguish original and reconstruction is lost in the proposal for the perimeter passageway of the same *podium*, which wants to pave with "a concrete similar to the old one that remains preserved".

It seems that the intentions to reconstruct the *podium* with bricks were not carried out. In an uncatalogued photograph of the AAFV, dated on the reverse on September 13, 1969, we see how the anastylosis of a *podium* section in the southwestern quadrant has already been executed. In another image, also uncatalogued and in this case nor dated, we see how the operators place the orthostats by means of a pulley supported by a wooden scaffold.

### 3.7 AAFV 953 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1970)

In the folder AAFV 953 (Ferrant, 1970) the architect proposes a first reconstruction of a considerable extension, specifically "of the two vaults next to the central one, analogous to the symmetrical ones, of the higher order and the consolidation of the two of the lower order in which the former rest". That is, starting from the axis of symmetry marked by the arch of the *pulpitum*, he wants to rebuilt two vaults on the west side, although only the start of the arch of the first one remained.

We can place in this phase of work an uncatalogued photograph of the AAFV, dated on the back on September 20, 1970. It shows a state of work very similar to that of the negatives 0468\_23242 and 0468\_23243 of the Lleida archive. The terraces of the southwest quadrant are partially reconstructed, up to 6 rows from the middle *cavea*. The side rooms and the central gallery have not been covered in the west monumental door.



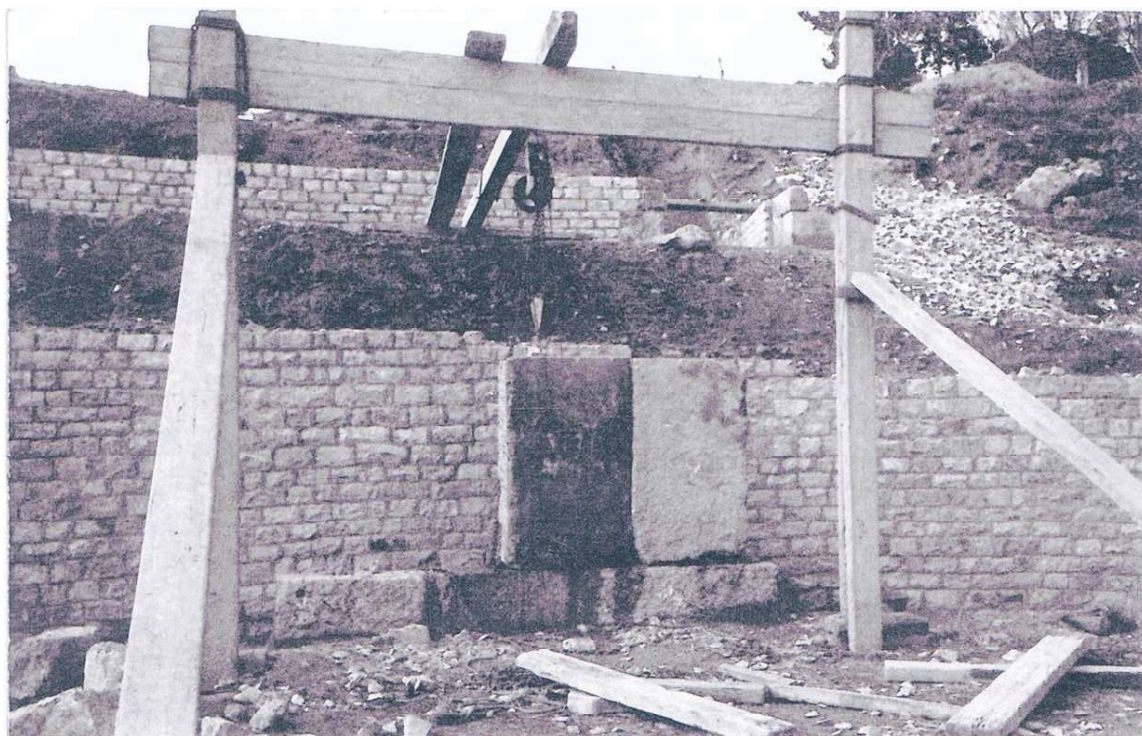


Figure 7. Anastylosis of a podium section in the southwest quadrant of the *arena*, towards 1969.



Figure 8. Final stages of the works directed by Alejandro Ferrant. View from the top of the corner between the apse and the southern transept of the church. Ferrant archive, COAC, photographic negative reference 0468\_23243. Can be dated between 1970 and 1971 comparing images from the AAFV.

### 3.8 AAFV 954 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1971)

From the documentation contained in the folder AAFV 954 (Ferrant, 1971) we can conclude that the reconstructions continued at a good pace. Now it was the turn of the rooms adjacent to the gallery of the west monumental door, covered by vaults inspired, according to Ferrant, in those preserved in the grandstands of the sea-side that the previous year he had enlarged.

### 3.9 AAFV 955 Conservation works (Ferrant, 1972)

The project from de folder AAFV 955 (Ferrant, 1972) focuses on the reconstruction of the concrete vault that covers the gallery of the west gate, then completely disappeared. It provides a photograph of the works corresponding to the previous year, with the side rooms of the gallery already covered by vaults, although the access doors did not even have the voussoirs arches that we can contemplate today. Actually, Ferrant recognizes in the project reports that there was no in situ remains of the arches recreated at the ends of the concrete vault of the central gallery or the openings of the lateral rooms.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS. THE AMPHITHEATRE TODAY

More than 40 years have passed since the works described here were carried out; the image resulting from Ferrant's intervention is part of city's urban landscape: there are photographs of tourist promotion in which almost only the reconstructed parts of the amphitheatre are shown. It is usual that not even the inhabitants of Tarragona know that most of what they see, as well as the seats they use in the events that the building hosts, are a recreation less than half a century old. At a scientific level, Ferrant's interventions are known, but as time goes by it is increasingly difficult to distinguish exactly where they start and end, because constructive techniques were used that, with the patina that gives time, in some areas are visually almost identical to the originals. Although, to finish, we are going to point out a curious fact: in recent dates the reconstructed parts have begun to show obvious and dangerous andstructural problems. This leads us to a question: do we have to restore the fake parts of Tarragona's Roman amphitheatre?

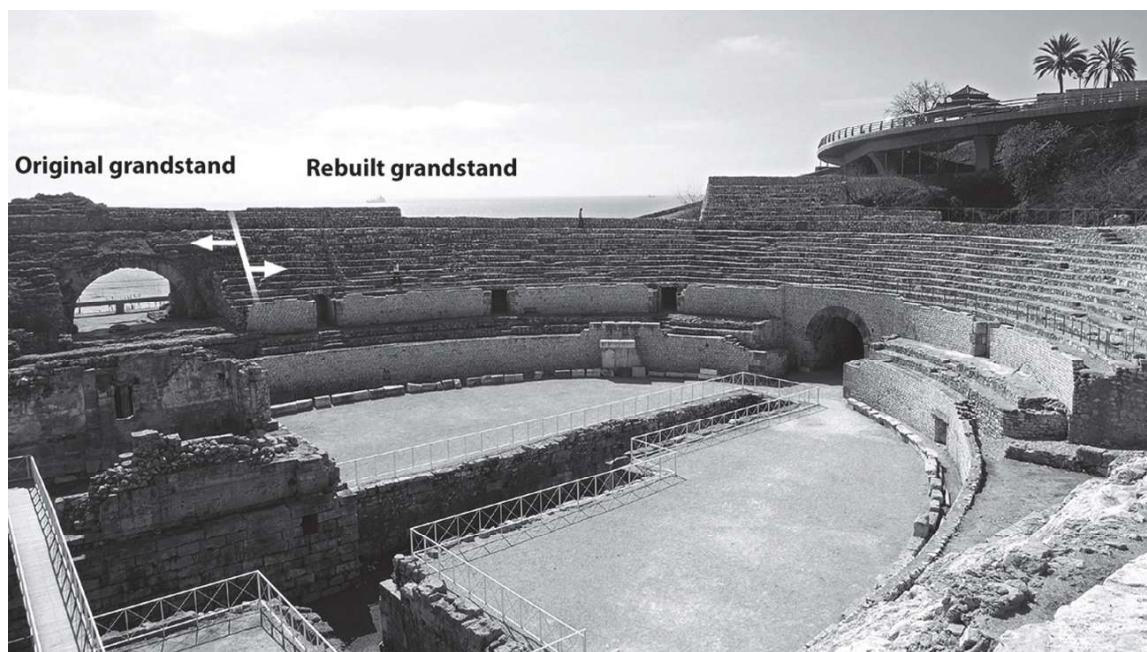


Figure 9. Roman amphitheatre of Tarragona at present.



## 5 CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY. WORKS DIRECTED BY ALEJANDRO FERRANT

- 1962 Delimitation of the site and continuation of Samuel Ventura's excavations.
- 1963 Consolidation of walls: of the church, of the access to the arena from the southern grandstands and, possibly, of the upper level of the vaults of the same structures and the fossae of the arena. Internal emptying of the lower level of the vaults of the southern grandstands. Discovery and excavation of the main drain gallery.
- 1964 Excavations in the seafront of the southern grandstands, including the transfer of a canalization and the demolition of a modern retaining wall. The lower level of the support vaults in this facade becomes visible. Reconstruction of, at least, a part of the eastern vault of this lower level.
- 1967 Excavations in the southwest quadrant of the *cavea*. Excavation of the west gate begins.
- 1968 The excavations continue, the west door is completely discovered and the level of the northern half of the arena is slightly lowered. At the end of 1968 or the beginning of 1969, mimetic reconstructions of the *opus vittatum* walls that form the bottom of the perimeter corridor of the *podium* are conducted. We also distinguish wall reconstructions at the base of the *media cavea* in the southwest quadrant.
- 1969 Anastylis of the arena *podium* (and paving of the perimeter corridor?). Emptying spaces in the area of the east door; execution of the vault that covers the main gallery of this door, below the modern stairs that go down to the Miracle beach.
- 1970 Reconstruction of the vaults of the upper level of the seaside grandstands, at the west side of the *pulpitum*, symmetrical to the originals of the east side. Reconstruction of grandstands in the southwest quadrant.
- 1971 Vaults are built on the side rooms of the west door; the doors that give access to this spaces are completed with arches of voussoirs. Coatings of *opus vittatum* in the central gallery of the same west door.
- 1972 Construction of the inclined vault that covers the central gallery of the west door, as well as the stone arches that finish it on the side of the arena and on the exterior façade.
- 1973 Last phases of the reconstructions of the grandstands.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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