INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY

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Abstract: this text is an approximation to the criteria for intervention in industrial heritage throughout the last two decades in the 20th century and the first one in the 21st century. The shift in the economic system, being one of its pillars the exploitation of the city’s heritage and cultural values, is the context where the conservation of this must be placed in a large extent. Those industrial buildings that have survived ruin and demolition are integrated in the new functions of the post-industrial city. So, culture consumption is analyzed and evaluated in relation to different strategies for promotion and prestige of private and public institutions. It begins with the case of Vapor Vell as an example of institutional promotion. It continues with Caixa’s relationship with industrial heritage in a brand-prestige context, to end with the rehabilitation of the Plaza de Armas in Seville and the Alhóndiga in Bilbao, linking the relationship of industrial heritage with leisure and culture consumption. Definitely, this text makes clear that a high number of interventions in industrial heritage aim to transform the historical factory into a consumer product instead of preserving its historical value.

Key Words: Industrial Heritage. Conservation of Industrial Heritage. Industrial Architecture.

1. Introduction: Industrial is in

Industrial heritage is in the news. Press incites us to visit industrial museums, offers us routes or recommends hotels, restaurants...located in old factories; even invite us to live in them after being transformed into modern lofts. Industrial aesthetics is fashionable and a decorative style as well. As stated on a web devoted to indoor design:

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This kind of design tries to keep everything which originated it, hoarding the industrial aesthetics, accompanied by pillars, beams, face bricks and stainless steel, together with high ceilings, wide windows, well-lit spaces and concrete floors or floating hardwood floors.

No doubt, the precedent for this aesthetics is in High Tech architecture, so popular in the last two decades of the 20th century. This architectonic style aims to present architecture’s technological complexity by showing its technical and functional elements, in such a way that prefabricated materials, glass walls or steel structures be facing. Nowadays this complexity still subsists, trivialized in a fashion style.

However, the urban industrial landscape of the modern city is cast aside in the post-industrial city. It is no longer possible to talk about landscape, understood as the product of the coexistence of different architectonic typologies in an urban framework throughout a long period of time. Nowadays, in the post-industrial city, just those buildings that, due to different reasons (their historical value, the neighbours’ engagement in their conservation, the private or public willingness) have been saved from demolition and integrated to the new urban functions, do still survive.

2. THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY AND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

In the last two decades of the 20th century, the modern city undergoes important changes related to its planning which affect the productive context as well as the consumer’s, ending in the outcome of the post-industrial city.

From the point of view of production, the modern city undergoes a deindustrialization process. Those sectors which led the economic outburst after the Second World War such as the mining, iron and steel, textile or car industries disappear and are substituted by new models based on new technologies (microelectronics, robotics or information and telecommunication systems). This producing system favours a widespread and fragmentary location, since it can be placed in not necessarily near areas. So, it evolves from a system based on big industrial factories located in central urban areas to a network organization where every productive unit corresponds to a stage in the productive process, located on a metropolitan basis.

From the point of view of economic strategy, the modern society develops the Fordian mass consumption model based on the acquisition of standard products.

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3 Ibidem.
such as appliances, house, or car. A homogeneous model which meets the necessities of a society with homogeneous ways of life. However, from the 1980s consumption is fragmented by the outcome of multiple kinds of consumers. The ways of life diversify and the search for individualism is translated into the necessity of distinct products which imply a segmentation of production in smaller lots. The consumer, influenced by fashion, buys products of a short life cycle and is offered a great range of models to choose.

It is in this context where marketing and advertising acquire high importance and their influence extends from the product and brand to the context of countries, regions and cities. So these last use their strategies to manage the interchange between urban offer and demand. Some post-industrial cities manipulate their intangible products, especially those related to culture and heritage, in order to develop promotion campaigns following the strategies of the great commercial brands. The city is conceived of as a consumer product in itself. It is not only the place where goods interchange, turning itself into a product to be sold.

Many cities turn into brands themselves, in consumer products where one travels to, in places where one wants to live, which offer experiences or monuments which can become consumer urban icons; destinies many people travel to or dream of as a vital experience.

From the 1980s, as Penny Sparke says, the work of many British designers (and from other countries) is focused on creating new experiences, appealing to the emotional and the intangible by means of the contents of a museum or by the urban space. This focus is symptomatic of how the culture at the end of the 20th century is guided towards consumption rather than production.

All these changes happen in an urban-remodelling context where large emptied industrial spaces turn into land favourable for transformation processes which combine the creation of cultural equipment and public spaces, building or remodelling whole districts. In these processes of urban regeneration, the destiny of the obsolete industrial buildings suffers different fates. And so we witness both their complete demolition and disappearance and their partial or total conservation (for instance the Ruhr’s coalfield rationalization process).

In Spain, rationalization of the production system of the main industrial cities, such as Barcelona and Bilbao, entails the starting out of an urban regeneration model based on culture as a pretext for the city’s marketing campaign. This pro-

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cess coincides with a display and revaluation of obsolete industrial structures by means of both scientific meetings and the reappraisal work of neighbourhood associations; to this, one has to add the first bills for the protection of the industrial heritage in the Act of the Spanish Historical Heritage in 1985 and in the subsequent autonomic Acts. This heritage, despite its recent recognition, is deeply rooted in the population rather than in any other traditional cultural product, as, for instance, archaeological heritage. No doubt, according to José Castillo, “the bonds of industrial heritage to human activities, its proximity and its monumental presence have facilitated the quick acknowledgement by society”.

3. **Industrial heritage in the post-industrial city. The factory and culture and leisure consumption**

The factories of the first industrialization still working are, nowadays, scarce. A few examples may be quoted such as the beer factory “La Zaragozana” (1901) in Zaragoza and “Averly” (1880) a casting factory that until recent dates (2012) kept its production in the same city, or the arms factory in La Vega (1857) in Oviedo (its closure was announced in April 2012). Usually, production is abandoned and the architecture is functionally rationalized and updated to the new social needs. So, the historical industrial landscape is reduced to a urban landmark (a chimney, a building or a technical structure as La Carola crane in Bilbao) acquiring a high symbolic value: a tangible vestige of the neighbourhood’s industrial history and a footprint of the conservationist policy by means of which the public administration or the private entity obtain social prestige.

3.1. **An interventionist policy aiming at social prestige**

The first activities related to the conservation of industrial architecture date back to the 1980s, a decade in which great cities such as Barcelona, Bilbao, Madrid, Valencia or Zaragoza started out a rationalization of their emptied industrial spaces. These were years when the urban model of supplying neighbourhoods with cultural and social equipments come first, basically working-class neighbourhoods forgotten by the Francoist social policies. As a general practice, these neighbourhoods offered large industrial infrastructures claimed by the neighbours in order to install in them the new equipments. This was the situation in Barce-

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lona before the Olympic project. In this way, the city government decided to preserve some industrial landmarks, allocated to administrative services and to provide for cultural and social needs. Generally speaking, these interventions do not preserve the whole industrial complex but a significant part of it (for instance Barcelona, Can Fabra) allocating the rest of the lot for urban space or for new roads that optimize the resources for open areas or communication of these new neighbourhoods.

An example of the above mentioned is the preservation and intervention of the Vapor Vell (also known as Güell, Ramis i Cia Factory) in the Sants district. This old corduroy and velvet factory is located in the block surrounded by Galileu, Miracle, Joan Güell Streets and Serra i Arola Passage. It was built between 1840 and 1844, year when the industrial activity began, lasting up to 1891. Commissioned by Joan Güell, it was the first modern factory placed in Sants. After its closure, the spaces were occupied by industrial and leisure activities, up to 1976 when it was acquired by Jorba Preciados Company, Rumasa holding, to be replaced by a new big store building. In 1973 the neighbours started a campaign, Cop d’ull a Sants, claiming for the creation in the factory of equipment for the neighbourhood. This neighbour defence will last up to 1986, when the Town Hall of the city of Barcelona passes the Vapor Vell Especial Plan. Out of the overall industrial premises, just the main building and the chimney, 54 meters long and a square base 4 meters wide, is preserved for equipment. The rest of the premises are destined to residential houses and Joan Güell Street, which stretches out from Diagonal Avenue to Sants Square. In 1988 was listed as cultural good of national interest.

It is a square planned building with a gable roof, consisting of ground level and four storeys. It is made of masonry and solid brick with a wooden collar beam roof reinforced by metal stripes supported by cast columns.

The restoration of this building was designed by Josep Mª Julia Capdevila between 1998 and 2000, who at that time was Project Manager of the Architecture Department of Barcelona Town Hall. The process consists in the adaptation of levels 3rd and 4th as a library with an access from Joan Güell Street, and of ground, 1st and 2nd floors as public school with access from Galileo Street, whereas the play-


ground is placed in the outer zone of Milagro Street. In the process, the original structure of the building is kept, restoring the damaged parts although the spatial layoff undergoes an important transformation due to the new usages.

This kind of actions, in which we can include the recovery of the Zaragoza’s Slaughterhouse\(^\text{12}\), are justified, from the utilitarian point of view, by the necessity for social equipments in the neighbourhoods, trying that the architectonic intervention to find a balance between the pre-existing architecture and the contemporary project. However, the historical building is cut off in a large number of cases.

### 3.2. Culture consumption: the factory and the museum

The promoting policy of the new post-industrial city needs landmarks to be identified with, since only when the new equipment is relevant the new city is attractive and can be profitable from a real state point of view. So, the urban regeneration that Spanish cities such as Barcelona and Bilbao promote in the 1990s are focused on the appropriation of old spaces by new usages conceived of for the consumption of leisure time, entertainment and culture in general terms, which have enough capacity to generate new urban identities, usually in the form of spectacular architecture. The oncoming of start architects and the cult for the work of art happen\(^\text{13}\). In this decade and the following, the museum as a cultural institution provides itself with non-artistic functions\(^\text{14}\). It is a place for entertainment, meeting, and production; but, above all, a place where processes of urban revitalization such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the Centre of Contemporary Culture in Barcelona area activated\(^\text{15}\). In a not inconsiderable amount of cases, the new museums and contemporary art galleries are located in dishevelled industrial buildings which endure hard aesthetic processes by means of contemporary architecture, as for example, among others, the Aragonese Institute of Contemporary Art and Culture in the old workshops of the Provincial Orphanage in Zaragoza.

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15 **SUDJIC, Deyan**, *La arquitectura del poder... op. cit.*
This kind of processes is not only related to the promotion of the post-industrial city. There are examples which are the result of a careful marketing campaign by an entity which conceives of culture promotion as part of its own brand identity, such as the model promoted by La Caixa in CaixaForum.

La Caixa is a financial entity rooting down to the Caja de Pensiones para la Vejez y de Ahorros de Cataluña y Balears (“Retirement and Pension Fund of Catalonia and Balearic Islands” Translator’s Note) founded in 1904 by Francesc Moragas Barret. Its main purpose is to promote saving and its area of activity is originally confined to Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. From 1917 onwards, the Caixa devotes part of its surplus to social projects and civic and cultural promotion. In 1976, José Vilarasau is appointed general manager of the entity and a period of modernisation starts out with him, culminating in the renewal of the brand image and a new policy for cultural projects.

Up to that moment, the traditional name of the entity (Caja de Pensiones para la Vejez y el Ahorro) is accompanied by a shorter name “La Caixa” together with a motto “la Caixa de Catalunya y Balears”, in an attempt to be a referent in those territories using the Catalanian language, in a moment when its use was very restricted due to the Franquist linguistic policy. In short, when José Villarasau arrives to the entity, its corporate image is confusing: they use the traditional image in the beginning of the 20th century of the Fund, the simplified logo with the icon of the Via Laietana building and the motto “La Caixa”. Vilarasau makes the decision to unify everything in a new image which transmits the idea of both Catalonia and modernity.

In 1979, in order to fulfil this image change, the Landor studio, commanded by Claude Alverson, is contracted by Vilarasau. One of the targets is to unify under a single image all the set of activities the Caixa develops, from both financial and cultural points of view, in an interrelated and equalitarian way. In order to reach this target, the Californian studio proposes:

(...) to ask to a world renowned artist a project and use it as visual representation of the bank is in itself reaffirmation of the social and cultural responsibility of the financial community and reflects the Catalanian character in its artistic patronage. The election of the master Joan Miró complies with many of “La Caixa’s” requirements: born in Catalonia, living in Balearic Islands and world renowned, Miró has the unique capacity to communicate efficiently with all possible market segments of “La Caixa”, its main customers in Spain and abroad. His art is naive, fantastic and imaginative at the same time, but also elegant and sophisticated. It has the strength of primitive art, but also the grace of the subtle. This design concept supposes an ambitious and exciting bet in the world of financial communication16.

16 SANCHIS, Ima, Biografía de una estrella, Madrid, Península, 2001, p. 145.
Due to the reluctance of some managers to this solution, Vilarasau stated that “quite often the great financiers were precisely the great patrons of contemporary art and bank, high finance and art have been traditionally good travel companions”\(^{17}\). Finally, “La Caixa” orders Miró a tapestry out of which a star, initially eight-pointed, lastly five-pointed, will be detached as the logo for “La Caixa”, being its symbol for modernity and internationalism. In 1981 the Miró star is introduced in “La Caixa” Science Museum opening\(^{18}\). It is the beginning of a policy of promotion of contemporary art which will be developed by the CaixaForum model placed, in the two more emblematic instances (Madrid and Barcelona), in old factories strategically located in the urban scene.

From 1985 on, José Vilarasau begins La Caixa contemporary art collection under the artistic management of María Corral. This collection is built in by some eight hundred pieces of contemporary art. In the beginning it is located in the Paseo San Joan, but this seat will become small soon. For this reason, La Caixa Foundation considers the old textile factory Casarramona, placed in Plaza de España, in the surroundings of the trade fair, the National Museum of Catalanian Art and in front of the just-rebuilt Mies van der Rohe Pavilion, to be the perfect place for its collection and the starting-out of a built-in culture model: CaixaForum. Under the motto CaixaForum the new factory of art, “it tries to become a dissemination platform, mindful of social and cultural necessities and concerns. Families, students, old-people groups and schools have found in CaixaForum a new meeting-point”\(^{19}\).

Inaugurated on March 2\(^{nd}\) 2002, CaixaForum Barcelona is a project which includes an exhibition centre in addition to a large set of cultural infrastructures such as media library, library, auditorium and conference hall, places devoted to develop an intense program of social and educational activities (literary and artistic workshops for adults and children, poems reading, film, music, multimedia days, etc.)\(^{20}\).

The original building is the Casarramona Factory, built between 1909 and 1911 by the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch. The building is considered one of his latest modernist works with a neo-gothic inspiration. The factory was closed in 1920, after the Civil War was used as stables of the mounted police up to 1992, despite its being a property of La Caixa since 1963. The set was listed in 1976\(^{21}\). The building

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\(^{17}\) Ibidem, p. 154.

\(^{18}\) Ibidem, p. 184.


\(^{20}\) Ibidem.

\(^{21}\) Decree 248/1976, of January 9th, for which many works by the architect Puig i Cadafalch are listed as National Historic-artistic monuments, https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/1976/02/17/pdfs/A03316-03317.pdf. [Consulted on January 15\(^{th}\), 2014].
is made up of many units, three parallel united by a transversal one. Two of them are used as production units, warehousing and retail sale.

The intervention of the architect Roberto Luna is characterized by the respect to the structure and outer condition of the building. The units have been minimally modified in order to show temporal exhibitions and part of the permanent collection. The restoration of the façades and the brick treatment was supervised by Francisco Javier Asarta. The access to the building is a project by the Japanese architect Arata Isozaki. It consists of two big weathering steel tree-sculptures that point to the subterranean entrance into the building, and an inner stepped marble patio used as stage in musical and dancing events. In conclusion, as it is stated in the 2000 Annual Report, in the new seat of La Caixa Foundation “Modernist architecture will be united to cutting-edge architecture”22.

A more radical way of combining the old with the new is expressed in the next CaixaForum23 inaugurated in Madrid. In this case, it is the Herzog and De Meuron studio that participates or, as it is textually stated in the 2008 Annual Memory, “builds from the recovery of the old Mediodía Power Station in Madrid”24. The option in Madrid is a less singular building than in Barcelona but placed in the Paseo del Prado, in the known “museums mile”, next to El Prado Museum, Thyssen Museum and Reina Sofia Contemporary Art Museum.

The Mediodía Power Station is a building from 1900 built by the architect Jesús Carrasco y Encina, made of two brick units on a granite base with a central skylight and gable roof. The project by Herzog and De Meuron, inaugurated in March 2008, respects only the primitive geometry since it modifies the openings (some were blocked off and other news were opened), the façades are increased (a new level was added in addition to the excavation of underground in order to gain square meters) and the granite base is removed (in order to generate a new public square).

Summing up, the general image is maintained but, when hollowed out, the historic, architectonic and technological values the old power station building harboured were ignored.

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3.3. Leisure consumption: from mall to citizen’s experience

This conservationist attitude, developed by public and private institutions, at the service of propaganda (political and/or corporatist) is completed with its correlation with the consumption strategies of the post-industrial city. And so, when choosing a new use, industrial heritage turns into a container for different types of leisure which aim at stimulating consumption in society.

A commercial strategy of these characteristics gathering strength is:

(...) to locate shopping centres in places where pedestrian’s flux is guaranteed, such as railway stations, transport hubs and airports. In this sense, Renfe has undertaken an innovative journey, following the track of similar initiatives in the rest of Europe, founding companies such as NECSA (Nuevos Espacios Comerciales S.A.), NEFSA (Nuevas Estaciones de Ferrocarril S.A.), etc. guided since 2005 by ADIF (Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias) in order to optimize the stations (new and disused) with the promotion of Riofisa, in relation to integrated commerce25.

This model of commercial business located in a railway station has been designed in the projects of many railway stations such as Plaza de Armas, in Seville, Malaga, Príncipe Pío in Madrid and Sants in Barcelona and is in progress in other Spanish cities such as A Coruña, Vigo, Alicante, Albacete, Cartagena, Miranda de Ebro, Valladolid, Zamora, Lleida, Logroño, Huelva, Jaén, Cáceres, Gijón and Valencia.

The reason to revert the historical into a “commercial station” is due to the added value it possesses, because they are actually “urban landmarks in the lay-out of cities, both for the conspicuousness of its presence as for the noble and singular architecture that enhances the places they enclose”26.

The “consumer culture” that surrounds us turns the shopping routine in a leisure activity: to spend the whole day in a mall is entertainment, especially if a total experience is afforded. Shopping centres are, according to George Ritzer (1996), the modern “cathedrals of consumption” where we practice our “religion of consumption” and no better place to practice this religion than an old industrial cathedral.

An instance of this conversion from railway station to a “commercial station” is the commonly known as Córdoba Station or Plaza de la Armas Station in Seville. Its construction began in 1898 according to the project by engineers Nicolás Suárez Albizu and José Santos Silva, being inaugurated in 1901. It is the terminal building of the railway company M.Z.A. (Madrid-Zaragoza-Alicante). Its roof framing imitates that of the machine room in 1897 Paris Exhibition. The facades are

25 VAHI SERRANO, Amalia, La perspectiva territorial y urbana de los grandes equipamientos comerciales en Andalucía, Sevilla, Consejería de Obras Públicas y Transportes y Universidad de Sevilla, 2007, p. 47.

[314]
designed in the neo-mudejar trend taking historical buildings like the Alhambra in Granada as a reference.

In 1982, architect Antonio Barrionuevo and engineers Damián Álvarez and J. Cañada proceeded to restore the lobby up to 1990. In this year it was listed as cultural good in the category of monument by the Andalucia Government.

As a consequence of the Sevilla Universal Exhibition in 1992, Santa Justa railway station is put into operation and the old one in Plaza de Armas holds part of the city’s pavilion. In this process of change of use, all buildings and auxiliary infrastructures of the station but the passengers building are demolished. At the same time, the refurbishment of the outer space is carried out according to the project by architects Antonio González and Víctor Pérez Escolano. The rails’ dismantlement allows the city to recover its relationship with the Guadalquivir River and to open a new public square in the trains’ access into the station. This process implied to strip the passengers’ building of all infrastructures that give meaning to it.

After the Exhibition, the building is abandoned until 1999, when it is reopened as Plaza de Armas Leisure and Shopping Centre. This shopping centre houses many cinemas, restaurants and fashion shops. The transformation works in this shopping centre were carried out by NECSA, a company participated by Riofisa and Adif. Both the historical building, preserved with a few modifications, and the platforms area, where restaurants and shops stand, are modified so as to adapt the building. Finally, the entrance and way-out tracks were closed by a new steel-and-crystal window. Definitely, all this means a “tailored” preservation and the use of a heritage landmark at the service of a process of transformation of the city and the needs of a real state agency.

The Bilbao Alhóndiga (“Public granary” TN) case exceeds the shopping centre model and goes beyond a new space for leisure and culture consumption addressed to the citizen, although from the point of view of heritage conservation presents a very similar result. What is intended in the new Alhóndiga is to unite culture (“high culture” since it has a “generalist” exhibition hall) with different activities such as reading, sport, cinema, cooking, (more suitable to popular leisure). According to the Espacio’s architect-designer, Philippe Starck, the complex is “a free space where people go to know, to kiss and to feel themselves. A wonderful space, full of energy and enthusiasm.”

28 Royal Decree 1380/1990, from November 8, for which it is listed cultural good, in the category of monument, the Railway Station, placed in plaza de Armas, no number (Cordoba Station), in Seville. https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/1990/11/10/pdfs/A33098-33099.pdf. [Consulted on January 15th, 2014].
29 “Al sol de la Alhóndiga”, in El viajero Bilbao, 26-02-2011 p. 3.
30 Ibidem.
La Alhóndiga\textsuperscript{31} is located in a block of the Bilbao’s Ensanche, in Indautxu, and was projected by architect Ricardo Bastida. Between 1905 and 1909, Bastida erects a building of concrete pillars articulated around two inner patios and surrounded by facades of a carefully thought design because, despite being an industrial building, its location makes the architect to create very high-quality elevations, aesthetically speaking. The vanes’ encompassed rhythm defines the horizontal elevations broken by the presence of five towers placed in the angles. This building is in use until 1976. From that moment on, up to its transformation into a leisure and cultural centre in 2004, different projects are offered (parking in 1988, cultural centre proposed by Sáenz de Oiza y Fullaondo and sculptor Oteiza in 1989, seat to the Guggenheim Foundation, or sport facility in the 1990s). All of them, despite their different use, have in common the starting point: to demolish the building. In order to avoid this possibility, the Culture Department of the Basque Government listed the Alhóndiga in December 1998\textsuperscript{32}.

In 2002, within the actions by BILBAO Ría 2000\textsuperscript{33}, the Town Hall decided to place in the old Alhóndiga leisure, cultural and sport centre. In order to accomplish it, architect José Luis Burgos, between 2001 and 2002, demolished the inner structure and excavated five basements. In this process, the first gallery of pillars, in addition to the facades, is preserved, as it is stated in the Decree. In 2004 the parking is inaugurated and in 2005 the restoration of the facades is carried out. In the same year, Philippe Starck is contracted to design the leisure and cultural complex. In order to house the different activities in the inner part, he erects three cubes (leisure, culture, sport), supported by wide pillars, and turned around the axes that define the old building perimeter leaving a fourth empty space as an agora. Together with Starck work Thibaut Mathiey, who is in charge of the building corporative brand, and Lorenzo Baraldi, scenery expert, who recreates the different west and east architectonic styles in the columns that support the cubes. These columns, three meters high, are made of marble, bronze, steel, brick, glazed terra-cotta, cement and Lecce stone, and bring a theatrical and playful air to the complex.

Thibaut Mathieu in an interview states that:

(...) it is not a shopping centre. The future Alhóndiga is a multicultural complex, but not from a rigid point of view. The users may visit exhibitions, but also go to the gym, indulge a massage in the spa or have dinner in a restaurant. It is a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
  \bibitem{bib:32} Decree 397/1998 of December 22 for which it is listed cultural good, in the category of monument, the Alhóndiga Municipal building in Bilbao (BOPV 20/01/1999). \url{http://www.euskadi.net/cgi-bin_k54/ver_cCMD=VERDOC&BASE=B03A&DOCN=000019003&CONF=/config/k54/bopv_c.cnf}. [Consulted on January 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2014].
\end{thebibliography}
space for and by the citizen. In fact, the logo is made up of four inserted images of the city and two young people. Integration and enthusiasm34.

Definitely, the Starck’s team creates a modern leisure complex with an elitist ambition. Which is achieved by means of both the offer, including exhibitions (consumption of contemporary art as cultural and social distinction), and the architecture and design, united in this case in the always polemic and singular figure of Philippe Starck. About the appointment of this architect-designer the web of the newspaper *El Correo* states:

> Beyond the astonishing figures the project handled, the excitement resides in the fascinating capacity of Starck, a designer appropriate to the prestigious list of architects and planners who draw the present and future of Bilbao from years ago35.

To this, the statements of the start himself are added: “I want to make something splendid, full of energy, of enthusiasm. Definitely, a building with the elegance of the understanding and the beauty of happiness”36. The appointment of Philippe Starck, a media character better known as a start-designer than as an architect, is explained by Marian Egaña, La Alhóndiga Managing Director:

> (...) the project would not be easy, the building was listed in 1989, so the facade and the first gallery had to be respected, the plan should be viewed and addition could overpass the towers’ height. The project did not leave room for ostentation in the facades, for that reason an interior designer was the best option. Stack is not an architect but he collaborated with an office that signed for him37.

The triumph of design over architecture occurs also in the interior. And so, the same news has it that authorities asked for a sober building far from glamour; however, the Alhóndiga is full with what the employees name *starckadas*, as for instance: the stage in the auditorium has a frame as if it were a picture and two yellow chairs in a grey stall, or the design appearance the public library has. “There are corners with little armchairs, wheeled shelves where the books are ordered according to theme areas rather than call number”38. To all this, the design of the furniture and signage must be added. At the same time, Starck has worked in the surroundings, designing the pavements and the park. Summing up, a whole design, where the designer’s task is to create experiences above any other value, where one could wonder: is architecture the mother of all arts? Does architecture,
historic architecture in this case, matter? And, what is the role of heritage preservation in all this process?

Definitively, a model in which art and culture, sweetened by design, are exploited by public and private institutions in order to reinforce the local identity, to generate employment in the creative sector and to provide popular leisure activities which persuade of any conflict or questioning. A cultural model based on consumption rather than knowledge.

4. AS CONCLUSION

The industrial heritage is in fashion despite the process of destruction it has been subjected to, especially in the great factory centres such as Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Valencia or Avilés, among other cities. It consists of a slow but systematic process which substitutes industrial emptiness for new buildings. However, out of this destruction some specific examples, historical landmarks, can be saved, those to which a historical value is added in an attempt to recover the industrial past, what, in no case, implies a complete historical narration.

Once the conservation of these monuments has been agreed, it is necessary to provide new functions among which outstand those related to social equipments, culture and new ways of leisure consumption. Of all of them, those with more media relevance, due to start architects and their risky proposals, are related to the new model for museums at the end of the 20th century.

This adjustment, in a high number of instances, is made to listed buildings where legal protection has provided no limit or obstacle to prevent from hollowing them out, eliminating their structure or mutilating some of their parts. These criteria are not questioned nor the expedience of their use, despite their belonging to the cultural heritage of society. To end up, the industrial heritage is subject to the triviality of post-modern society which entails the unawareness by society of the importance of the History of Work, a key stage without which it could not have been possible to arrive to the present situation.