

Spanish Photography at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum

Fotografía española en el Museo de la Academia de Bellas Artes de Rusia

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RESUMEN

Diversas fotografías españolas forman parte de la colección del Museo de la Academia de Bellas Artes de Rusia. Las fotografías reproducen ciudades y arquitectura de España. Un ejemplo típico son dos imágenes de Zaragoza. En una de ellas se representa la vida alrededor de la Torre Nueva. En la otra fotografía podemos ver el ábside de la catedral de San Salvador. Estas fotografías fueron usadas en el sistema de enseñanza de la Arquitectura en la Academia Imperial de las Artes desde el último cuarto del siglo XIX. Ellas permiten apreciar pequeños detalles en los grandes elementos de arquitectura gracias al gran formato de los positivos a la albúmina. La mayor parte de las fotografías de la Academia de Bellas Artes de Rusia son fotografías comerciales, las cuales presentan el número de inventario y el título que fue marcado sobre los negativos. Estos positivos incluyen diferentes vistas de Ávila, Segovia, Granada y Madrid, entre otras ciudades.

Palabras clave: fotografía, colección, España, Rusia, papel a la albúmina, fotografía en colores, arquitectura, Alhambra, Alcázar.

ABSTRACT

Different Spanish photographs are part of collection at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum. The photographs depict cities and architecture of Spain. A typical example is two pictures of Zaragoza. In one of them, active life depicted around Torre Nueva. We can see apsis of San Salvador Cathedral on another photography. Photographs were used in educational process of architect at the Imperial Academy of Arts since last quarter of the nineteenth century. They can see all small details of great objects of architecture in the big size albumen prints. Most of photographs at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Academy Museum are examples of commercial photography, which have index number and title that were marked on negatives. These prints include different views of Ávila, Segovia, Granada, Madrid et al.

Keywords: photography, collection, Spain, Russia, albumen print, colour photography, architecture, Alhambra, Alcazar.

In our view, the history of museum collection could not be dissociated from the history of museum. Before starting description the Spanish photography at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum we make review of Museum history.



FIG. 1. Charles Clifford : Unknown porte, Sevilla. Albumen print, 27,4 x 33 cm (The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, Objects number Ф-1233).

The Imperial Academy of Arts was founded in St. Petersburg in 1757. At the same time, Museum of Academy opened as a first public museum in Russia. The creation of this museum was an important step, because it introduced the best art works from Europe for academic students.

The first photographic exhibition at the Imperial Academy of Arts took place in autumn 1839. It was the demonstration of daguerreotype triptych by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre¹. Three subjects are the view of Paris from the Pont Neuf and two photographs of art studio interior. All these daguerreotypes decorated in one bronze frame.

Imperial Academy of Fine Arts contained in some parts: educational organization or Academy, Library and Museum. Now the Library of Academy has name as the science library.

The Science Library of the Russian Academy of Fine Arts started research their daguerreotypes only in 2008².

Usually photographs came to Imperial Academy of Arts through the Library as a combination of gifts and purchases. Library and Museum of Academy joined collections throughout the 19th century. Contemporary Museum Photographic Collection has many photographs with special stamp «Library. Imperial Academy of Arts stamp».

The Imperial Academy of Arts was discontinued in 1918 after the Revolution. Museum was closed at the same time and exhibits became part of the mobile fund. The collections of Hermit-

1 BARKHOTOVA, E. (2005): «Les origines de la photographie russe: fragments d'une histoire (1839-1917)», *L'art russe dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle, en quête d'identité*, Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, p. 91.

2 POLYAKOVA, L. (2008): «Museum godsend», *The Moscow Museum of Modern Art's Magazine*, 5, pp. 44-47.

age and Russian Museum were filled up with photographs from the Imperial Academy of Arts Museum. Different organization have been decorated with exhibits from Museum collection between 1919 and 1925.

In total, since the October Revolution and before World War II Museum of Academy was open over a period of ten years and had two prolonged reorganizations. After the war's onset, some photographs were prepared for the evacuation. However, almost all Academy exhibits stayed over a siege in Leningrad.

In 1947, The Soviet Academy of Fine Arts Museum officially sanctioned a Section of Photography. Today Photographic Collection of The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum includes 37,000 negatives, 27,000 photographs and 11,300 slides.

Spanish collection contains approximately 150 items dating from 1850-1870 albumen print and approximately 20 gelatin silver prints made in 1930s. These images represent the work of professionals such as Ch. Clifford, J. Lévy, L. Masson etc. The photographs depict cities of Spain, as well as individual features in them such as streets, buildings and architectural elements.

The collection was assembled over a period of more than fifty years. Photographs used in educational process of architect at the Imperial Academy of Arts since last quarter of the 19th century. They can see all small details of great objects of architecture in the big size albumen prints. Museum have a Catalog of drawings and drafts of Architectural Class that were purchased since 1871. This catalog published in 1901 and museum exhibits from catalog have special labels. For example, photography³ of Cour des Donnelles in Sevilla produced by L.L. has label with text: *Imperial Academy of Arts. High School of Art. List of Architectural Class #2014*. Some photographs of Alhambra came as a purchase from J. Vasse shop at the end of 19th century.

Photographs of Spain, basically, came to the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum as purchases after 1917. Historian of Art A. Konstantinova, architect R. Kitner and other collectors assembled many prints at the second part of 1930s. In addition, the biggest Russian museums gave back exhibits that had been allocated to these museums from Academy Museum. For example, the Hermitage returned 40 photographs to Academy Museum on April 28, 1935 after then photographs had been part of Hermitage collection on June 1930.



FIG. 2. Unknown photographer: Portrait of unknown men, Granada. Albumen print, 19,3 x 23,8 cm (The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, Objects number Ф-11678).

3 Object number Ф-16074.



FIG. 3. J. Lévy et Cie.: Torre Nueva, Zaragoza. Albumen print, 22,5 x 27,7 cm (The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, Objects number Ф-271).

The Museum has 22 photographs produced by Charles Clifford (1821–1863). He was one of the finest photographers of 19th century Spain, and he spent most of his career there. Clifford

was very effective at capturing architectural subjects through his technical mastery of the large-format camera⁴ (FIG. 1).

Consisting of over four images by Jean Laurent spanning the 1870s, the collection superbly chronicles Alhambra architecture.

To date, we can say that there are two photographs by J. Lévy et Cie., six F. Linares and E. Beauchy photographs, four photographs by L. Masson and two print by G. Lekegian & Co and Garzon at the Museum collection. Some photographs have only initial of photographer, for example, nine albumen prints signed as *L.L.* and six photochrome as *P.Z.* Almost 80 prints produced by unknown photographer.

Absence of information about photographer was normal in Russian museum tradition over 20th century. This rendered difficult the attribution. Things began to change recently. Through access to digital collections and databases, curators and museum staff could easily take advantage of such knowledge to attribute their photographs.

The museum has arranged the geographic index by general views, county and city. Cities and other places are further broken down by buildings, institutions such as churches and universities, streets, and different events.

Highlights from the collection include the following:

1. Granada (68 albumen prints and photochrome); Sevilla (30 albumen prints and photochrome); Toledo (ten photographs); Burgos (eight photographs); Salamanca and Córdoba (five photographs each); Valladolid (four albumen prints); Segovia (three photographs); Zaragoza, Ávila and León (two photographs each); Madrid, Guadalajara and Murcia (one photograph each).
2. Fragments of architectural décor.



FIG. 4. J. Laurent (Madrid): Puerta de la Sala de los Abencerrajes por la parte interior, Granada. Albumen print, 24,6 x 34,3 cm (The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, Objects number Ф-11692).

4 20th October 2015, Charles Clifford, The Court of the Lions, *Victoria and Albert Museum*. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/users/node/4844>

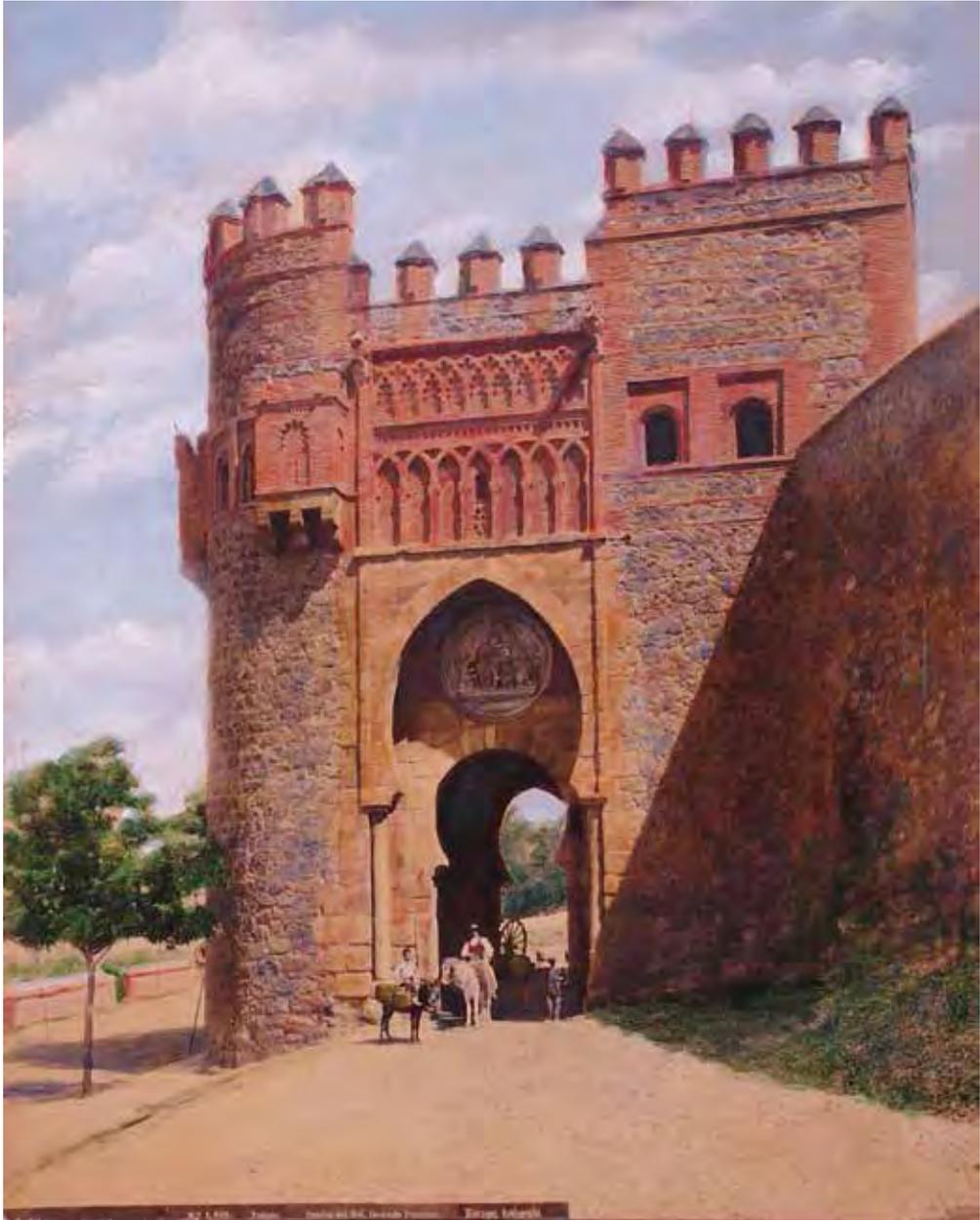


FIG. 5. Garzon: Puerta del Sol, Toledo. Hand-coloured albumen print, 42,6 x 54,4 cm (The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, Objects number Ф-16063).

The two most common objects are the Alhambra in Granada and the Alcázar of Seville. There are some reasons of that, one being that the decorations within the palaces typified the remains of Moorish dominion within Spain. Another one being that Museum has the collection of architectural models and casts of Alhambra. Russian architects Pavel Notbek, Carl Rahau and Carl

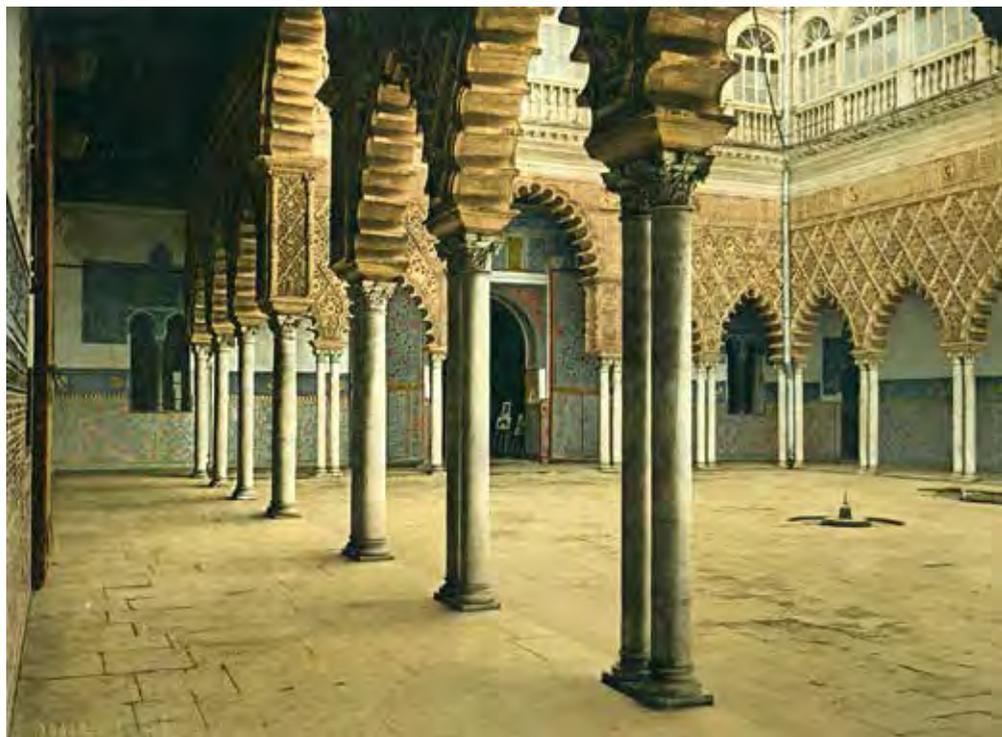


FIG. 6. P.Z.: Patio de las Doncellas, Alcázar de Sevilla. Photochrom, 22,2 x 16,5 cm (The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, Objects number Ф-11614).

Colman were restoring buildings of Alhambra from 1853 to 1863. The Imperial Academy of Arts purchased their drawings, models and casts later⁵.

Although coverage of Spanish people is disappointing, the museum has a small group of portraits. Two copies of group portrait depict three men in Alhambra yard⁶ (FIG. 2).

One copy of this photo has pieces of newspaper in foreign language stuck at the backside of passe-partout. Today we try to understand what is write on this list.

The Collection contains one albumen print on glossy gold-edged cardboard portray of young woman near colonnade⁷.

The collection reflects the history of photography. Passion for discoveries was the fundamental feature of the second part of the 19th century. With the advent of albumen print, a new photographic era had begun. Regular photographic expeditions, opening studios in towns, possibility of distribution of photographs wrote the new picture of the world. Photography has become a new way to assign inaccessible objects and to travel without leaving home.

5 KONDAKOV, N. (1914): «Models and casts of Alhambra», *Anniversary Book of Imperial Academy of Arts. 1764-1914*. Saint Petersburg: R.Golike and A.Vilborg, p. 104.

6 Objects number Ф-11678, Ф-16979.

7 Objects number Ф-9176.

Large format albumen prints with image blur and detailed, legible cabinet format prints demonstrate development of photographic techniques from 1850s to 1870s. Some details of photographs acknowledge well-known facts about photographic processes. For example, we can see hands of tower clocks⁸ (FIG. 3). All these photographs were produced closer to noon because it needed for good shots. Blurred figures were a sign of early albumen prints era. Although skilled retouch prints are a part of collection. Photographers reconstructed sky, leaves and lost elements with this art manner on their commercial photographs. Some images depict features of architectural, museum photographing such as the use of scales, rests and supports (FIG. 4).

Museum photographs also reflect the evolution of colour photography. We can trace the modification of colour images through the hand-colored albumen print (FIG. 5) and photochrome (FIG. 6). The beauty of architecture are emphasized by bright colours of these photographs. Unfortunately, all the available treasures cannot be shown limitations on space of article.

For attribution our photographs we use different software, for example Adobe Photoshop. This program help us to read faded signs and stumps.

In the light of current interest to the history of photography, the Spanish Photography at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum is a good example of thematic collection. Although, most of old Spanish commercial photographs were published in different catalogs and on-line collection of large museums from all over the world, research of Academy Museum Collection needed the support of professional community. We hope that cooperation among researchers will expand, upgrade and rollout knowledge about Spanish photography and its history.