



SPAIN arts & culture and Fundación Consejo España - Estados Unidos present:
Designing America: Spain's Imprint in the U.S.



STACKHOUSE, Thomas, 1783
North America after the American Revolution. Spanish Territory was Recognized Internationally
Biblioteca Nacional de España MR/4/I SERIE 26/003

WHERE AND WHEN

Former Residence of the Ambassadors of Spain, 2801 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009

EXHIBITION ON VIEW: December 8 - February 28, 2016

Gallery Hours: Monday to Thursday from 10am to 5pm.

Friday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm

**Closed from December 24, 2015 to January 3, 2016; January 18 and February 15, 2016.*

Free and open to the public.

PHOTOS: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/spainartsculture/albums/72157659699578618>

MORE INFO: <http://www.spainculture.us/city/washington-dc/designing-america/>
<http://www.designing-america.com/>



Designing America: Spain's Imprint in the U.S.

Washington.- **SPAIN arts & culture** present **Designing America: Spain's Imprint in the U.S.**, an exhibition organized by **Fundación Consejo España - Estados Unidos**, in partnership with Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE, National Library of Spain). Through the dialogue between historic documents and the combined narration of texts, images and audio-visual elements, the exhibit displays the important contributions that Spain has made to the construction of the United States territory, landscape and cities, starting with the first settlements to present day.

Curated by Spanish architects **Juan Miguel Hernández León** and **Francisco Arques Soler** and designed as an open cross-sectional tour through architecture, urban planning and the territory, **Designing America: Spain's Imprint in the U.S.** enlightens the historical, political and cultural events that have marked the course of 500 years of common history between the United States and Spain.

From 1513, the year when Ponce de León first set foot in Florida, through to the twenty-first century, Spain has had an influential presence in America. Spain was the first European nation to settle in the territory that is known today as the United States, and the one that has stayed the longest (1565-1821). This influence extends to very distinct fields: from the exploration and charting on the maps of the American territory to the founding of American cities.

Cartography was an instrument of colonization and research. Designed to develop a picture of a continent, which had historically appeared as a rift between the Eurasian continent and Europe. Legends, inaccurate data, tools, and visions of the colonizers all came together in forming an image of the Americas. Moreover, Spaniards consolidated their occupation of the American territory by establishing cities. Their foundation was regulated by the *Leyes de Indias* (Laws of the Indies), which described the characteristics of the geography: the soil, the accessibility to water, security of the port, and the urban layout, which was based on a grid around a central plaza, or in front of the town's docks. The first city founded by Spain in the United States was **St Augustine** in 1565, also making it the oldest city in the United States.

The Spanish contribution is present in emblematic cities such as New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles or New Orleans, which preserve an undeniable Spanish presence in their twenty-first century structure, culture and heritage. **Juan Miguel Hernández León**, curator of the exhibition explains: *"After the 1788 New Orleans' fire, almost all the French buildings were destroyed. The Spanish authorities that were ruling at that moment reconstructed the city including traditional construction elements of our country, like the balconies or the 'mansard roof' at the City Council."* The French Quarter, arranged on a grid around the Plaza de Armas, was substantially enlarged and fortified, and significant engineering works were implemented. Spaniards have not only changed the aesthetics but they also used new materials and changed wood by stucco to avoid destructive fires in this emblematic city.

"It is also interesting, adds Hernández León, how the exhibit shows the story of the first free community of ex-slaves, founded in 1738 by the Spanish Ambassador in Florida, Manuel de Montiano. It was called 'Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose' or Fort Mose (pronounced Moh-Say). More than a century before the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves from the British colonies were able to follow the original "Underground Railroad" which headed to the Spanish colony of Florida. They were given their freedom, if they joined the Spanish army and declared their allegiance to the King of Spain and to the Catholic Church."

Designing America: Spain's Imprint in the U.S. shows us the fragmented stories of influential figures, such as **Rafael Guastavino (1842-1908)**, a Valencian master builder who introduced 'timber vaulting' to the U.S. and constructed nearly a thousand buildings with his patented tiling system (like the vaults at the Natural History Museum and at the Supreme Court Building in DC, or those in Ellis Island's Registry Room, St John the Divine, and Grand Central in New York), and **José Luis Sert (1953-1969)**, an exile of the Spanish Civil War who went on to lead the Harvard Department of Architecture.

Over the last few decades, the most prestigious Spanish offices have also created significant buildings in the United States and Spanish cutting-edge architects and engineers are continually moving to this country to work. The Spanish presence in American architecture is not limited to the building themselves; the teachings of Spanish architects have become an important influence on young architects in American universities. Among them are the three Spaniards who have led the Department of Architecture at Harvard Graduate School of Design: **Josep Lluís Sert**, the first to hold the office (from 1953 to 1969), paved the way for his successor, **Rafael Moneo** (1985-1990), and **Iñaki Abalos**, who from 2013 holds the position today.



Embarking on a themed, yet non-sequential cross-sectional survey of these contributions, the exhibition is presented in four blocks: *The image of America*; *Constructing the territory*; *Cities: the Spanish urban space*; and *Constructed works: architecture and engineering*. In each of these blocks, a set of more than 20 maps, images and objects is matched with parallel narrations that complement and enrich this collection. The visit is completed by *The Spanish Language: place names in the United States*, an interactive installation that helps to localize the states and cities in the US, the video *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, and a multi-touch table with zoomable maps. Most of the images will have QR codes.

The exhibit will travel to other cities around the US. From April 14, 2016 to July 20, 2016 will be displayed at Julia Ideson Building at Houston Public Library.

Designing America: Spain's Imprint in the U.S. is part of several key events that reflect upon the common history between Spain and the United States (the 500th anniversary of Ponce de León's arrival in Florida, the 500th anniversary of the exploration of the Pacific Ocean by Núñez de Balboa, the 300th anniversary of the birth of California's founder, Father Junípero Serra; and the 450th anniversary of the foundation of the first city in the United States: St. Augustine, Florida.)

About the curators

Curator: Juan Miguel Hernández León

With a Doctorate in Architecture from the School of Architecture of Madrid (ETSAM), Juan Miguel Hernández León serves as director and cofounder of the Cultural Landscape Research Group (GIPC-UPM), director of the International Center of Cultural Heritage Studies (CIESPC), and as president of the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid.

Deputy curator: Francisco Arques Soler

Francisco Arques Soler has a Doctorate in Architecture from the Technical University of Madrid (UPM) and is a Professor of Architectural Design at the Superior Technical School of Architecture of Madrid (ETSAM). He is also a member of the Cultural Landscape Research Group (GIPC-UPM).

About SPAIN arts & culture

SPAIN arts & culture features the most cutting-edge works of international renowned Spanish artists in fields such as design, urban culture, architecture, visual arts, film, performing arts, literature and music. A series of exhibitions, conferences, showcases, and performances take place every year at the most prestigious American cultural institutions bringing a taste of all the creativity, history, and talent of Spanish artists to the American public. This program is organized by the Embassy of Spain's Cultural Office in Washington DC and its network of General Consulates and Cervantes Institutes in the United States together with the Spain-USA Foundation. More info: www.spainculture.us

About the Fundación Consejo España - Estados Unidos

Created in 1997, the Fundación Consejo España - Estados Unidos is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the relationship between Spain and the United States through civil society. Based in Madrid it brings together notable representatives from business, public administration, politics and cultural and academic institutions. Through this exhibition, the foundation joins the celebrations taking place between 2013 and 2015 to commemorate key events associated with this bilateral relation. More info: <http://www.spainusa.org>