

Completed in 2017 by the late Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas, the Alcázar Genil Metro Station in Granada, Spain, is a one-of-a-kind challenge, mixing engineering and heritage issues, echoing Torrecillas’ lasting search for “contemporaneity through the vernacular”.

ÁNGEL MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA-POSADA

Removing solid, subtracting matter: isn’t excavation the early form of every construction? It is resonant that the same etymology serves to allude to the structural basis of our buildings or to a pioneer human settlement, as well as to designate a transcendental idea or the primal action of all creation: found, foundation or fundament.

The project of the Alcázar Genil Metro Station in Granada for Junta de Andalucía, by the deeply missed architect Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas, who died prematurely in 2015 at the age of 53, is a beautiful demonstration of this challenge, which has exalted his approach to the past and to tradition through space and matter. The blissful combination of place, programme and project results in a fascinating architecture, which is both modern and atavistic, a kind of immersion in an atmosphere somewhere between engineering efficiency and the suggestion of a ruin, like a journey through time, between the cave and the machine, in which one manages to be simultaneously in a speleological adventure and in an ultramodern gallery.

The trajectory of the city of Granada is rich and we continue to enjoy the wisdom of the different cultures that overlapped in it. There is, of course, the wonder of the Alhambra, an ornamental and also technical tour de force, with its joyful gallery of artists and craftsmen and its deployment of water channels and ducts in a steep orography. And there is the popular adoption of certain constructive practices, pragmatic and essential responses to environmental requirements, such as the houses in the caves of Socromonte area. Torrecillas devoted himself to gathering many of them, in the manner of a compilation of solutions in his doctoral dissertation, *Return Trip. The encounter of contemporaneity through the vernacular*, with chapter titles such as “Finding the solution below ground.”

It is easy to imagine the relevant layers of information still contained in the subsoil of Granada. The construction of the underground railroad network that began in 2007 revealed an infrastructure of water, a work of Almohad engineering in the thirteenth century, which redefined the original proposal. Torrecillas managed to integrate the water infrastructure into the new construction —around 3,500 sq.metres, including platforms, corridors and technical spaces— without affecting the daily life of the station. The surface of the walls and columns exhibits a particular texture, that of melting ground and concrete, a consequence of the exposed pile foundations. Visitors can see the archaeological remains, occupying an area around 500 sq.metres, in a sort of limbo between the waters of the past and the future, on a bridge between the lobby and the street. The challenge consisted in preserving the walls of the ancient pool (128x27 metres). After the piling and laying of roof slabs, the excavation culminated in rescuing the water tank. Later on they

created a domed structure to contain it, using concrete formwork against the earth. The removal of the earth created a particular effect of ground on concrete that melts both materials, the old and the modern one, a mix of pragmatism and preservation, fusing in its rough carnality the rugged texture of the earth, or the cavern, with the exposed stratigraphy of concrete.

There are few typologies more vibrant than a station, a place of movement and encounters. Claudio Magris wrote in *The Danube*, “There is no single train of time, which leads in a single direction at a constant speed; from time to time it meets another train, which comes from the opposite side, from the past, and for a certain distance that past runs alongside us”. In his *History of Eternity*, Jorge Luis Borges envisioned time as a fluid state which could lead to the future, or flow from it to the past. It is evocative to think of the modern carriages that cross this space between ancestral walls, illuminated with the lights of tomorrow. Jiménez Torrecillas was not able to see the completion of the project in 2017 or the trains traveling between the past and the future, he could only imagine them, as he did before with the Nasrid wall East of Granada, with the new incarnation of the tower of Huéscar, with the reflections in the Dal Bat Showroom, again in Granada, sheets of glass between rough stones that foreshadowed the Alcázar Genil station.

While this project was being excavated and Antonio was fighting his battle against his disease without losing his contagious enthusiasm, he carried out another singular commission, the installation of an elevator between the walls of the palace of Carlos V, which configure a circular patio in the middle of the Islamic enclosure of the Alhambra. It is a project analogous to that of Alcázar Genil, and complementary in its small scale, a small precise box, a transparent and polished piece of technology next to the cyclopean and rough presence of the stone, a cabinet to make possible new uses that would keep the landmarked structure alive, an elevator in a cavity as in a grotto, between the mass and the void; like this station, another interchange between the past and the future, while we remain on the rails of the present, traveling back and forth. ■

Sur la dalle de couronnement se trouve un ancien chemin de ronde qui a été reconstitué sur la voûte en béton.

On the coronation flagstone is an ancient rampart walk, which has been reconstructed on the concrete vault.





Station de métro Alcázar Genil  
Grenade, Espagne

**Maitrise d’ouvrage**  
Agencia de Obra Pública  
de la Junta de Andalucía

**Architectes**  
Estudio Jiménez Torrecillas

**Co-traitants**  
Alberto Sánchez López, Ricardo Carvajal  
Fernández, Francisco Garzón Vico,  
Manuel López Olmedo, David Rodríguez  
Moya (ingénieurs), Miguel Ángel Ramos  
Puertollano, Alejandro García Martínez  
(architectes techniques),  
Ricardo Hernández Soriano,  
Michelle Panella (consultants),  
Carmen Tienza Durán (rénovation),  
Ángel Rodríguez Aguilera (archéologie),  
Ángela Gonzalez Quesada  
(historienne de l’art)

**Entreprises**  
Metrogranada U.T.E.  
Ferroval Agroman S.A  
UCOP Construcciones S.A

**Programme**  
Station de métro, locaux techniques,  
espaces d’accueil, espaces communs

**Superficie**  
Surface totale : 4 139 m<sup>2</sup>  
Surface utile : 3 503 m<sup>2</sup>

**Calendrier**  
Chantier : 2012-2015

