

DESIDERATA

Introduction to the Burgos Architecture Guide

2025

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The Spanish Royal Academy tells us that *'desiderata'* is a collection of things that are wanted and desired.

How is it possible to write an introduction to a book on Modern and Contemporary Architecture in Burgos without mentioning its magnificent cathedral?

When I was in Burgos recently to give a lecture at Arquia, the first thing I did, the first thing *we* did, was to revisit the Cathedral, which is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Ancient? Modern? Futuristic? In these architectural works, time stands still, and beauty reigns supreme. It is the beauty that every architect would want for their work and demonstrated by the works we will be discussing in this book.

The Cathedral of Santa María, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, is a glorious Gothic building with Renaissance and Baroque elements inside that make it even more beautiful. The parents of Isabella I of Castile, John II of Castile and Isabella of Portugal, are buried there in a magnificent star-shaped mausoleum designed by Gil de Siloé. And there too is the tomb of El Cid Campeador.

If, to begin with, I were to mention Juan Navarro Baldeweg's Museum of Human Evolution, and the Church of Santo Domingo by Fray Coello and Casa Secuoya designed by Pedro Silleras and Pedro Gutierrez I can tell you that in all of them you the shadow of the beauty of the Cathedral is palpable. As our forebears once wrote: "*sub umbra alarum tuarum, protegenos*" (under the shadow of your wings, protect us),

The Juan Navarro Baldeweg Museum has already received numerous national and international awards. Built on the site of the former Convent of San Pablo, it has a commanding presence.

Casa Secuoya by Silleras and Gutiérrez is so beautiful that I have been told that even peacocks have decided to live in its shade. Pedro Silleras and I were once students of Alejandro de la Sota, whose assistant during that academic year was Juan Navarro Baldeweg. What a coincidence!

And the Dominican church of Fr. Coello is, like all his churches, absolutely beautiful. I still remember as a child, how my mother, herself the daughter of an architect, was loud in her praise of the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Camino by Fr. Coello, León.

And if any of you from outside Burgos tell me that you are not familiar with these works, then I would point to the lack of interest of our current, uncultured society, in which people know nothing, or almost nothing, unless it appears in the media. Have you noticed that architecture has disappeared from the news in recent times? Music, painting, literature, poetry and sculpture feature prominently in the news and magazine supplements, but architecture never, ever does.

That is why we are so grateful to the promoters of this guide to Modern and Contemporary Architecture in Burgos, which has finally been produced. They have made this long-held *desiderata* a reality.