



## 2010 On Site Review Report

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by *Michele Lamprakos*

# Madinat Al-Zahra Museum

*Cordoba, Spain*



### **Architect**

*Nieto Sobejano / Fuensanta Nieto, Enrique Sobejano*

### **Client**

*Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura*

### **Design**

*2001 - 2003*

### **Completed**

*2008*



# **Madinat Al-Zahra Museum**

*Cordoba, Spain*

## **I. Introduction**

The tenth century palace city of Madinat al-Zahra is widely considered to be one of the most significant early Islamic archaeological sites in the world, and the most extensive in western Europe. The museum was conceived as a place to interpret the site and display archaeological findings. The building also serves as the headquarters for the archaeological team and as a training and research centre. The idea was to create a building where the work of archaeologists would be visible to visitors, making it, in effect, a kind of ‘working museum’.

The building is the refined and subtle design of Nieto Sobejano Architects, a firm which, according to a noted architectural critic, will soon be counted among the top architectural firms in Europe. The museum is located to the southeast of the ancient palace city, just outside the area of archaeological remains. The architects’ first reaction was, ‘we should not build on this site’. As such, they dug into it, simulating an archaeological ‘excavation’: they laid a grid on the site, and began to excavate and ‘discover’ the walls that would define the building. The resulting complex blends seamlessly into the site and surrounding farmland: a series of rectangles composed of walls, patios and plantings which, taken together, seem more like a landscape than a building. Architectural forms and materials are inspired by, and abstracted from, the remains of Umayyad buildings on the site and in Cordoba.

The significance of the museum extends beyond architectural excellence and sensitivity to site. It reflects a reversal of Spanish historiography, which for decades denied the Islamic past as part of Spain’s heritage. The impact of the building and its excellent audiovisual programming is already evident on the large number of visitors who come daily from Andalusia and other regions of Spain. For historians, cultural critics, and officials, the museum tells a story of tolerance and *convivencia* under an Islamic empire in the heart of Europe. That story has contemporary relevance: it can help to shape contemporary perceptions of Islam. At the same time, as Cordoba’s mayor noted, the historical example of *convivencia* can serve ‘as a reference point for Europe’.

## **II. Contextual Information**

### **A. *Historical Background and Significance***

A provincial capital under the Romans and the Visigoths, Cordoba was conquered by Muslim Berbers in 711. In 756 the Umayyad dynasty of Damascus, having lost the caliphal title to the Abbasids, emigrated to Andalusia; they succeeded in unifying various factions and established an emirate at Cordoba. The next two centuries saw consolidation of Umayyad political power in Andalusia, as a counterforce to the Abbasids in Iraq and the (Shiite) Fatimids in Egypt. The construction and subsequent expansions of the magnificent Great Mosque at Cordoba are emblematic of Umayyad artistic and political aspirations.

In 929 Abd al-Rahman III declared himself caliph, ‘ruler of the faithful’—in direct competition to Abbasid and Fatimid claimants. The Cordoban caliphate (929-1013) controlled most of the Iberian peninsula and is considered the highpoint of Islamic rule in Spain. It was a period of prosperity and cultural flourishing to which Muslims, Jews, and Christians contributed. The term *convivencia* was coined by medieval historians to describe this era of relative peace and harmony. Although it has been challenged by some scholars, *convivencia* has become the banner of cultural heritage in Andalusia. Indeed, it is a central theme in Cordoba’s bid to be selected European Cultural Capital for 2016.

Shortly after his declaration of an independent caliphate, Abd al-Rahman began work on a new palace city five kilometres to the west of Cordoba, apparently to legitimise his claim. Construction started at Madinat al-Zahra in 936, and he moved his court there from Cordoba 11 years later. Built on a series of terraces, Madinat al-Zahra covered nearly 280 acres (including residential quarters). The city was celebrated for its cultural life and its fantastic opulence: magnificent buildings, gardens filled with pools, fountains, and statuary, and marvels like a mercury-filled reflecting pool and a menagerie of exotic animals. As a 2005 New York Times article notes, the construction of Madinat al-Zahra ‘was a singular moment in history, when the most vibrant intellectual and cultural force in Europe was rooted in Islam, and when the heart of Islam was in many ways rooted in Europe’.

Construction continued under Abd al-Rahman’s successors: subtle transformations shed light on the evolution of protocol and administration in the final years of the Cordoban caliphate. In 1010 Madinat al-Zahra was sacked in a conflict over succession that would bring down the Cordoban caliphate. In subsequent decades and centuries, much of the building material was removed for use building projects in Seville and elsewhere.

The archaeological remains of Madinat al-Zahra were discovered in 1911; since then, approximately 10-15% of the site has been excavated. The significance of the ruins lies not only in their excellent state of preservation, but in the authorship of the complex and the brevity of its history. Abd al-Rahman created the city *ex nihilo*; eight decades later the city was destroyed, never to be re-inhabited. Antonio Vallejo, who has directed excavations for 25 years, notes that Madinat al-Zahra was the largest city to be built at one time in Western Europe. The conception and design of a single Muslim ruler, the site represents an ‘ideal prototype’ of tenth century Islamic culture.

## **B. *Local Architectural Character***

The architectural character of the tenth century city was closely related to contemporary works in Cordoba, in particular, the Great Mosque (indeed, the mosque at Madinat al-Zahra has been called ‘the little sister’ of the *Mezquita*). Scholars have written of the relationship between Madinat al-Zahra and the country residence of the first Umayyad ruler in Rusafa, Syria: with supporting literary evidence, they see Madinat al-Zahra as an expression of nostalgia for the Umayyad homeland. Syrian architectural and landscape forms were translated into the Andalusian context, building on Roman and Visigothic forms and using local materials and craft traditions. Building materials included limestone, brick, marble, and carved stucco.

### **C. *Climatic Conditions***

Cordoba has a dry climate, extremely hot in the summer. Temperatures average 27°C in the summer and 9-10°C degrees in winter. Rainfall averages 44mm annually. After several years of drought, Andalusia saw unusually heavy rainfall in the winter of 2010: the Guadalquivir River flooded and some 1,500 families throughout the province were forced to flee their homes.

### **D. *Immediate Surroundings of the Site***

As noted above, Madinat al-Zahra is located five miles to the west of Cordoba. It is surrounded by farmland and, on the south, by random residential development which has been a source of on-going controversy for the Municipality of Cordoba. The site is bounded on the north by the foothills of the Sierra Morena mountains, from which the three terraces of Madinat al-Zahra were excavated. The site is bounded on the south and east by roads. The road on the south side leads to Cordoba; the road on the east leads uphill to the current entry to the site, a small building (offices and museum) constructed in the 1930's. A monastery and ruins of a church are located just outside the site boundaries.

### **E. *Topography of and Approach to the Site***

From the base of the hills on the north side of the site, the land slopes gently to the southeast, to form a plateau on which the museum is built.

Visitors arrive at the site by bus, taxi, or car from Cordoba (the museum is on the route of many organised tours). After visiting the museum, visitors are transported by shuttle bus to the uphill side of the archaeological site; they enter the site through the above-mentioned building, and progress downhill on the terraces. The Archaeological Sector intends to build a footpath from the museum to the site: this is the axis of the tenth century ceremonial road that led to Madinat al-Zahra from Cordoba. The architects designed a ramp on the north side of the museum to direct visitors to this footpath: this will allow visitors to enter the site as one would have in the tenth century.

## **III. Programme**

### **A. *History of the Inception of the Project***

Antonio Vallejo describes the museum as the culmination of the work that began on the site in 1911. He joined the Junta de Andalusia's Archaeological Sector in 1985, and was instrumental in crafting the vision and program for the museum. In the mid-1990's a master site plan was developed with the participation of architect Juan Navarro Baldeweg, known for his work on historic sites. The goal of the master plan was two-fold: to finalise a physical plan and program for the site, tourist visits, and interpretive centre; and to provide a physical barrier to encroaching development (a local law expanding protection of the site was passed around this time, but the law was not enforced).

The master plan located the future museum/interpretive centre at the southeast corner of the site, just outside the area of archaeological remains (as determined by infrared technology). The placement also has historical significance: as noted above, it marks the historical entry to the Madinat al-Zahra.

**B. *How were the Architects and Specialists chosen?***

In 1999 the Junta de Andalusia launched an international competition for the design of the museum. Nieto Sobejano won the competition.

It is worth noting that all of the work in Nieto Sobejano's two small offices (Madrid and Berlin) is the result of competitions they have won in Spain, Germany, Austria, and elsewhere. Many of these projects are museums or cultural centres, and involve additions or interventions in historic sites.

**C. *General Program Objectives***

Vallejo's goal was to create an archaeological museum that not only displayed artefacts, but interpreted the site and its architecture through audiovisual programming. This type of museum was relatively new for Spain (although not for Europe). The building was also to serve as headquarters for the archaeological team: it should provide facilities for the conservation of artefacts and the training of archaeologists. Finally, the museum was to include research and conference facilities. The government was initially concerned that the program was overly ambitious, Vallejo said, but it was sustained in the competition brief.

**D. *Functional Requirements***

The architects were asked to design a building that accommodated the three program areas described above: a museum for display of artefacts and site interpretation; a working area for the archaeological team; and research facilities for local and visiting scholars. This was outlined in a detailed competition brief, which also provided background on the history of the site, the excavations, and the master plan.

**IV. *Description***

**A. *Building Data***

The total building area is 9,125m<sup>2</sup> on two floors: the ground floor (7,293m<sup>2</sup>), where the main program areas are located; and the floor below - the lower level of museum, archaeological work areas, loading dock, and 'back-of-house' spaces. The ground floor is located below grade, its flat roof rising slightly above the surrounding earth. There is only one room that protrudes above the roof plane: a kind of *mirador* that offers a view of the archaeological site and the landscape.

## **B. *Evolution of the Design Concept***

### *Site Approach: Response to Physical Constraints, Landscape*

As noted earlier, the site was chosen because it lies just beyond the ruins. Because of the magnificent archaeological site and the bucolic landscape, the architects did not want to build on the site. As such, they designed a building buried in the earth that could be read as part of the landscape. They chose to simulate an archaeological excavation - imposing a grid on the site and digging down into the earth.

The building consists of a series of rectangles or 'pavilions' nestled in the earth, each housing a discrete program area. The rectangular form is repeated in the landscape: beds are planted with species believed to have existed at Madinat al-Zahra, including olive and orange trees. The use of the pavilion module allows for future expansion, if program needs require.

### *Formal Aspects*

As noted above, the architects' concept was to simulate an architectural excavation: the building's formal language and materials derive from this concept. The building has a rough quality, evoking the utilitarian structures one might find at an excavation. At the same time, it incorporates elements of Islamic-Andalusian-Islamic architecture, in particular, those found at Madinat al-Zahra - expressing these in a modern idiom.

Although the building is partially buried in the earth, various devices are used to ensure the presence of natural light: an exterior corridor wraps the building, and a series of patios allow light into the building mass. The patio or 'outdoor room' is an Islamic-Andalusian form, found in the palaces and houses of Madinat al-Zahra as well as in the old town of Cordoba.

### *Spatial Organisation*

The central patio is the main organizing element of the building: to its west lies the public area (Museum, auditorium, and cafeteria); to the east and south are 'private' areas (museum staff, archaeologists, and researchers).

The facades of the central patio are the true facades of the building - as they are in the introverted courtyard house. The east and north facades of the patio are articulated with small openings that create a mashrabiyya-like effect, since they receive the most intense light in summer. The south and west facades are glass, visually continuous with the surrounding lobbies. As in the courtyard house, a pool cools the patio through condensation; the patio is partially shaded by an overhang on the south and west walls. Adjacent to the cafeteria, another patio filled with orange trees provides an outdoor the eating area.

In order to reach the various program areas, one moves downward into the earth: both the public entry and the staff entry, for example, ramp down from grade to the ground floor. Within the Museum, too, a ramp takes visitors to the lower level. External and internal ramps and corridors create the experience of 'walking between walls' (Sobejano's phrase), from one terrace to another, as one does on the archaeological site.

The archaeological wing is organised as a series of spaces that connect in section and plan.

### *Response to User Requirements*

The organisation of the complex is clear and appears to work well for the various user groups: visitors, archaeologists, and museum staff.

- Visitors

The visitors' sequence is focused largely on the west part of the complex. There is a generous entry area with ticket window, but the area is often crowded due to high attendance. Visitors are shown an orientation film in the auditorium, and can then visit the Museum. Before moving onto the site, they can browse in the bookstore and have lunch in the cafeteria, which opens onto a lovely patio filled with orange trees.

The highpoint of the visitor experience is certainly the Museum, which uses audiovisual programming to interpret the site and displayed artefacts. The viewing room on the third floor offers a view of the archaeological site and the landscape. A site plan and section etched in core-ten steel along the window orients the visitor to the site.

Although the architects made a distinction between public and private zones, the public can walk through the entire building. Even where areas are restricted, the architects created views through internal and external windows. Their goal was to reveal to the public the working nature of the complex, and the close integration between archaeology, conservation, and museology. One such element is a patio/work yard on the west side of the archaeologists' wing. It was designed for outdoor work and the display of artefacts that have not yet been conserved (in particular *atauriques*, ornamental carvings). The archaeological team, however, has decided not to display artefacts there because of exposure to the elements (even though currently these artefacts are on the site, in the open air).

- Archaeologists

The archaeologists' wing provides spacious work areas and good linkages between spaces. The conservation and work areas on the lower level are double-height spaces, with offices on the mezzanine above. The lower level corridor has sliding steel doors on both sides, linking the work/conservation areas on the west and the work/storage areas and loading dock on the east. The upper level corridor has large glass windows onto the storage and work areas below, so that visitors can observe the work.

- Museum staff

Offices for the museum staff are located in the wing that runs between the central patio and the 'work yard'. The east walls of the offices are (like the corridor) articulated with mashrabiyya-like openings, to break up the morning light. The offices are comfortable and seem to receive sufficient light. Sliding doors between the four offices can be opened,



so that they can function as a single work space. ‘The architects really thought about the staff when they designed the offices’, said Maria Serrano, the museum director.

- Researchers

The building is also intended to serve as a research centre for visiting scholars, as well as a conference venue. The research library (two levels, south corridor) is the main amenity. The auditorium and multi-purpose room across the hall can be used for conference activities.

Since the building has been open to the public for a very short time, it may take some time to develop this aspect of the program, and to publicise the Museum and Research Centre as a conference venue.

### C. *Structure, Materials, Technology*

#### *Structural Systems, Construction Technology, and Materials*

As mentioned above, the architect’s intent was to create a ‘rough’ building that evoked the retaining walls and temporary structures of architectural digs. As such, there is a restricted pallet of materials, and details are direct and simple.

Exterior and interior walls are bearing walls of concrete; columns are restricted to the lower level, where open space is needed for building services. The floors and ceilings are concrete slabs. At ground level, the slab is flush on the ceiling side. Roofing is coreten panels laid across the concrete beams, with metal framing for intermediate support. ‘We wanted the building to age well’, said Nieto. On the roof, the panels lay directly on the walls: as the coreten rusts and sheds water onto the white concrete, the materials appear to merge, as if returning to the earth.

The white concrete was poured against wooden forms; the impression of the boards has been left throughout, emphasizing the roughness and horizontality of the design. In interior corridors, iroko wood is used to clad the walls; boards are of the same dimension used for the concrete forms. Patios are paved in limestone.

Materials were chosen to evoke those used at Madinat al-Zahra and in Cordoba: white concrete suggests the white stone walls on the site; coreten steel for doors and windows—and the monumental panel at the north end of the work yard - evoke the massive bronze doors of the Mezquita. The coreten panel, doors, frames and fittings were made by a steel craftsman working closely with the architects: they are, in essence, ‘carpentry’ in steel. Many of these frames hold large panels of glass, as at the window walls surrounding the central patio.

The small rectangular openings in several walls (along the central patio, the office wing, and the library wing) simulate the effect of *mashrabiyya*—restricting views and modulating intense sunlight. On the inside face of these openings are single-glazed casement windows, framed in the same hand-crafted coreten steel.

The building's mechanical system is air-based heating and cooling. Some passive heating/cooling benefits should be achieved. Since the building opened so recently, figures for heating and cooling costs were not available.

#### *Technology: Audiovisual Displays*

The museological concept of the Museum is a critical part of, and integral to, the experience of the building. The audio-visual displays are interesting and engaging—helping visitors to understand the physical site they are about to visit, the artefacts, and the wider context of Cordoba and the region. 3-D computer models, maps, and interactive displays treat the following subjects:

- History of the caliphate
- The Andalusian and Mediterranean contexts
- Site, plan and infrastructure: Madinat al-Zahra and Cordoba
- Destruction of the city
- Spoliation of the site and recuperation of remains
- Social and political structure: caliph and heir; the elite; servants; inhabitants of the city
- The mosque at Madinat al-Zahra; its relationship to the Great Mosque of Cordoba

Models and displays are linked to surrounding artefacts. More traditional graphic panels are also accessible at computer stations, which have been found to be more appealing to young visitors.

Mention should also be made of the orientation film shown in the auditorium, which presents an overview of the Cordoban caliphate and the history of Madinat al-Zahra. Currently the film is in Spanish only; a project for production of a version with subtitles and audio in other languages (via headphones) is currently out to bid.

#### ***D. Origin of Technology, Materials, Labour Force, Professionals***

As noted above, the architects are from Madrid, but work in Cordoba (their Centre for Contemporary Creation, at the edge of the old city, is currently under construction). Consultants, engineers, exhibit designers, and exhibit installers are from Madrid.

Antonio Vallejo Triano, who directs the archaeological site and was responsible for the Museum concept and direction, lives in Cordoba.

The contractors are from Seville. The Andalusian Government required that a contractor from the region be used for the project. No contractor was large enough to qualify for a public project; so four smaller firms formed a company for the purpose of building the project. There were advantages and disadvantages to this arrangement. On the one hand, local labour was used; the architects were able to take advantage of the smaller size of the companies to work with individual craftsmen on particular details (like the steel craftsman). On the other hand, Nieto Sobejano had to work hard to ensure quality of construction; to this end, they assigned an architect to the site on a full-time basis.

Building materials, with the exception of the iroko wood, were either produced in Andalusia or readily available.

## **V. Construction Schedule and Costs**

### **A. *History of Project Design and Implementation***

1999	International competition launched
2001	Project contract signed
2001-3	Design
2005-8	Construction
2008	Occupancy by museum staff, archaeological team
2009	Opened to the public

### **B. *Total Costs and Main Sources of Financing***

Total cost of construction:	13,152,013 Euro
Total cost of Museum installation:	3,000,000 Euro

Funds and land were provided by the Andalusian government.

### **C. *Qualitative Analysis of Costs***

Cost per square metre:	1,441.32 Euro
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## **VI. Technical Assessment**

### **A. *Functional Assessment***

As described above (Response to User Requirements) the building appears to function well for the various user groups. Spatial organisation and way-finding are clear. Patios, diffused with light, tend to orient the visitor to the main axes and program spaces.

The only problem appears to be the large numbers of visitors. Clearly this is a mixed blessing, since high attendance is desirable. There are large crowds on the weekend, filling the entry area and lobbies around the patio. During the week there are tour groups, and the Museum's outreach program brings student groups from local schools and universities. At these times the public spaces are crowded, but still manageable. The spaces that might normally induce contemplation - the central patio and lobby - are quite noisy.

The Museum Director, Maria Serrano, is managing the crowds by confining tour groups to the morning hours (10:00 AM to 12:00 PM). She is also considering a visit-by-appointment system for weekends (this is currently done at the Alhambra).

**B. *Climatic Performance***

The building seems well adapted to its climate, in terms of its massing and materials. The patio is a local form, designed to create microclimates within the building mass. Here, five patios distributed throughout the building provide natural light. An exterior corridor around the building assures that light reaches the perimeter. The architects hope to reap benefits from passive cooling and heating because the building is below grade.

**C. *Response to Treatment of Water and Rainfall***

Landscaped surfaces are mostly pervious (gravel beds, plantings; one parking area is paved with green pavers). Site drainage does not appear to be a problem.

When I visited the project in March, roof repair was in progress: water had penetrated the roof system due to unusually heavy winter rains. The architects explained that because Andalusia is very dry, waterproofing is not usually continuous over the concrete roof beams. But with the heavy rains, this discontinuity may have allowed water to penetrate. The contractor is removing the coreten panels and applying waterproof membrane over the beams, to create a continuous water barrier.

**D. *Adaptation to the Natural Environment***

The project is very sensitive to the site - both its historical and natural features. As noted above, plantings are native species, believed to have been cultivated at Madinat al-Zahra.

**E. *Choice of Materials, Level of Technology***

The choice of materials and construction technique suits the design concept, the program, and the climate. The architects chose to design an informal space 'beneath the ground', that evokes the working nature of the complex. The palette of materials is simple and beautiful: they are given texture and scale by the hand-crafted nature of the building (wood-built forms, steel joinery, etc.)

**F. *Emergency Situations***

The building was designed according to current building codes, including seismic requirements (Cordoba is in area considered at moderate risk for earthquakes).

**G. *Aging and Maintenance Problems***

Not applicable, since the building is new. Some water leakage at the roof occurred with unusually heavy rains this winter; the problem appears to have been resolved and the roof is being fixed.

## **H. *Impact of the Project on the Site***

The choice of site in the master plan placed the Museum and Research Centre at some distance from the site. As stated earlier, this was of necessity: it was the closest area where no archaeological remains could be detected underground. The location is also in keeping with current planning guidelines for cultural heritage sites: it keeps cars away from the remains. Visitors are currently taken to the site by shuttle bus; when the planned pathway is built (beginning at the diagonal ramp on the north side of the building), visitors will be able to approach the site on foot, from the direction that visitors approached in the tenth century.

## **I. *Ease and Appropriateness of Furnishings***

The coolness of the structural materials (concrete, stone paving) is offset on the interior by the use of iroko wood panelling. The pattern of the boards, together with the lighting, creates a warm and intimate effect. The furnishings are simple and appropriate for the building.

## **VII. Users**

### **A. *Description of Those Who Use of Benefit from the Project***

The largest group of visitors comes from Andalusia; the next largest, from other regions of Spain; the next, from EU countries; last, non-EU countries. The museum also has an outreach program for local schools.

### **B. *Response to the Project by Professionals, Cultural Intelligentsia, Users, Community***

*What do Architectural Professionals and the Cultural Intelligentsia think about the Project?*

The Museum and Research Centre at Madinat al-Zahra have been widely covered in Spanish architectural journals and in the general press (see bibliography).

In an interview Luis Fernandez-Galiano, editor of *Aquitectura Viva* and one of the foremost critics in Europe, praised the Museum and Research Centre at Madinat al-Zahra. It figures as one of the key projects in the yearbook he is writing. The Museum is very significant, he said, for the history of Spain. As for the building, it is inspired by agricultural countryside: it deals with 'landscape as a primary characteristic... in a sense, it is a work of landscape.' It is a 'sophisticated work by Nieto and Sobejano... at the moment of their blossoming'.

Carlota Alvarez Basso directs Cordoba 2016, the organisation behind the city's bid for selection as European Cultural Capital. She explained their program, which includes cultural programs celebrating Cordoba's historical links to the Islamic world, Europe, and Latin America. It also includes the notion of the 'Cordoban paradigm', that is, a tradition of inter-cultural and inter-faith tolerance. 'Cordoba is the future, not only the past', she said. 'That's why the museum is so important'.

### *What is the Reaction of Users and Neighbours?*

Based on my observations, visitors to the museum seem to have favourable reactions to both the building and the exhibits.

The reactions of the museum staff and the Archaeological Sector are very positive. The building has transformed the capacity of the latter: with the opening of the building, Vallejo's staff has increased from 4 to 35 (archaeologists and helpers). The sector now has increased training capacity, and the possibility of bringing in additional support for special projects. Their work is backed up by the on-site research library.

I did not have the opportunity to survey neighbours. There may be lingering tensions with the municipal government over the right to build on land adjacent to the site (see R. Mclean, 'Growth in Spain Threatens a Jewel of Medieval Islam', *New York Times*, August 16, 2005).

## **VIII. Persons involved**

### *Architectural Design*

Fuensanta Nieto and Enrique Sobejano (with staff and independent contributors).

### *Responsible for Museum Concept and Programming*

Antonio Vallejo Triano, Director of Madinat al-Zahra Archaeological Site

For a complete list of contributors, see attached list.

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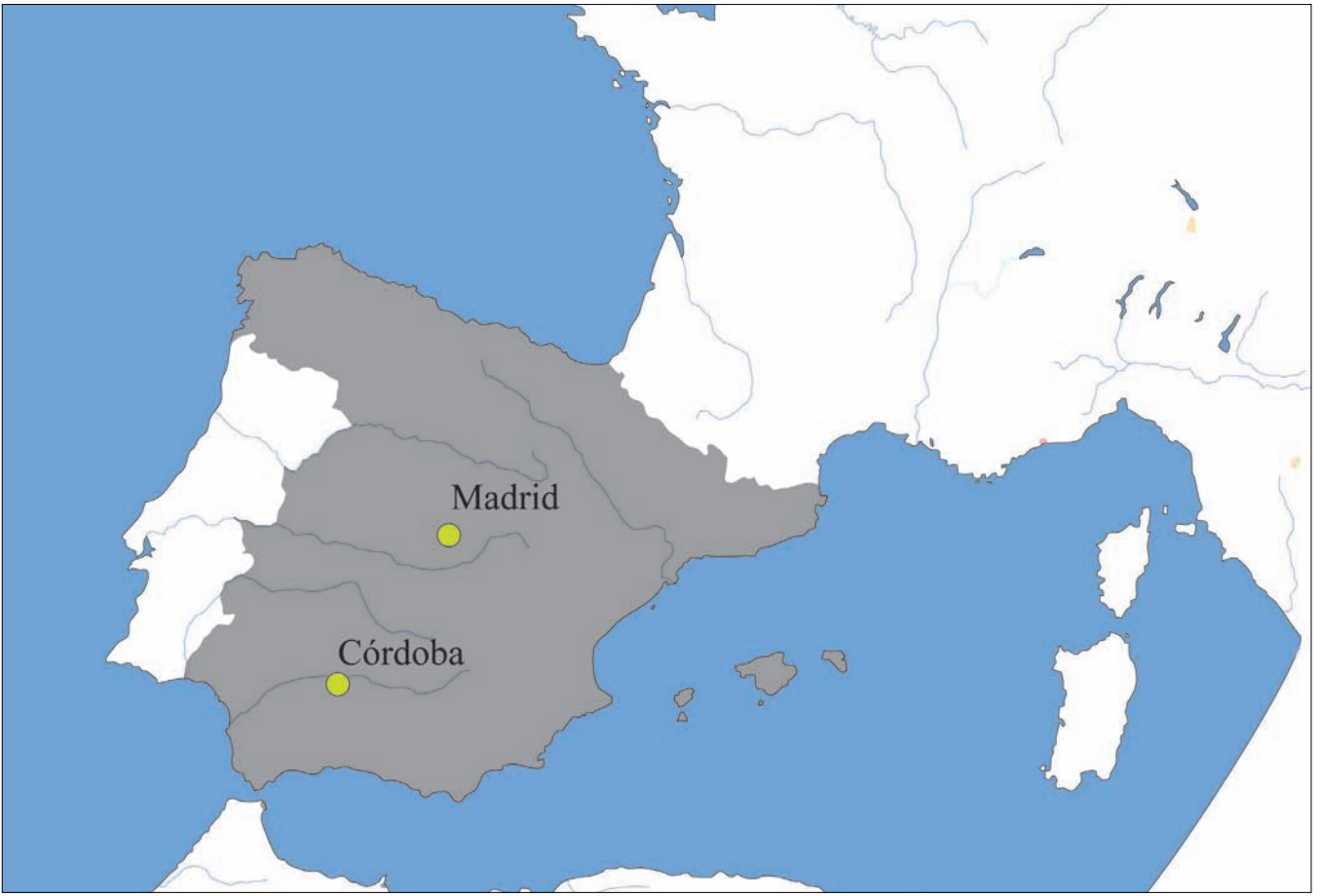
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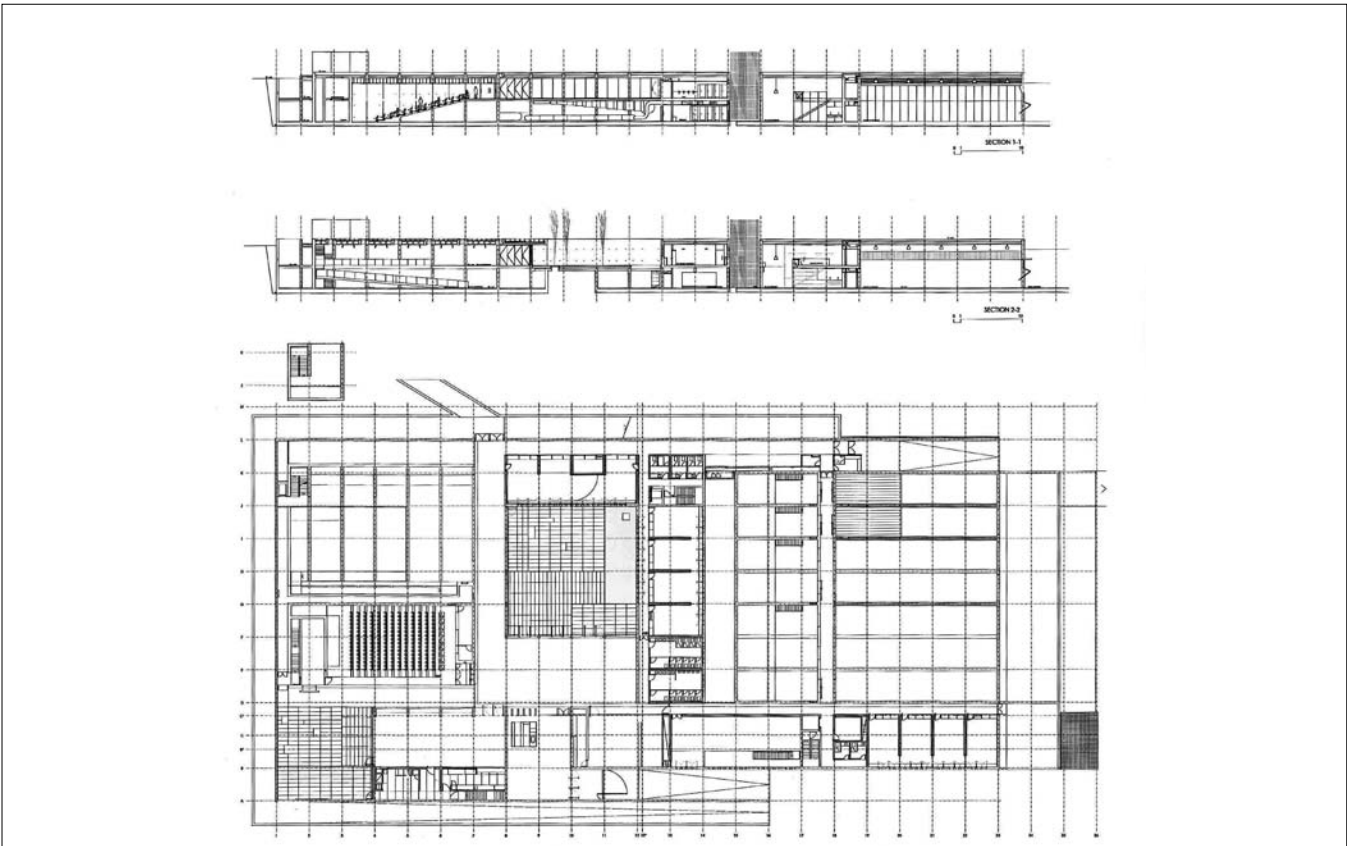
**Michele Lamprakos**

*April 2010*

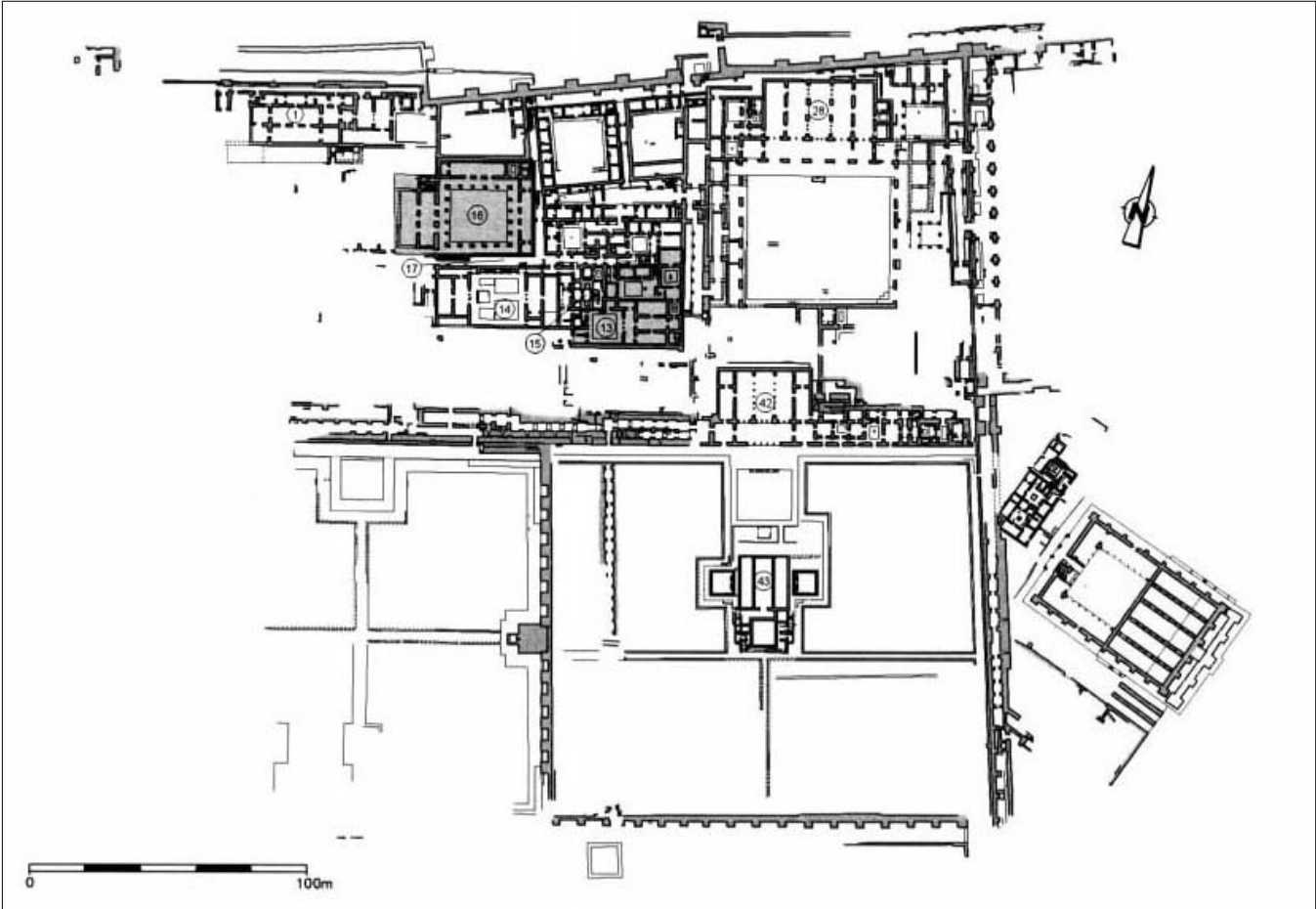








Excavated portion of the palace at Madinat al-Zahra (source: A. Vallejo, “Transformation of a Caliphal City”)







Overall views of the archeological site.

The diagonal ramp at right runs along the ancient road into the Madinat al-Zahra, and the future walking path to the Museum.







View of approach and entry.

View of entry.





Entrance to the museum.

View of main patio from the lobby.







View of central patio.

View of mashrabiyya-type openings, and reflecting pool.





Weathering effects planned by the architects – giving the impression that the building materials merge and return to the earth.

Detail of materials at central patio.





View of the main lobby.



Corridor on the south side of the building. The white concrete is textured by the wood formwork - and the rhythm is repeated by oroko wood paneling.





Stacks at the research library are located downstairs.



Corridor in the Museum staff wing, on the east side of the central patio. Hand-made casement windows in coreten steel are placed on the inside of the mashrabiyya-like openings.



Archeologists' storage and work area; the main labs and offices are across the hall.



The "work yard" along the office wing, terminated by a massive corten panel.



The mirador on the third level of the Museum: from here visitors can view the site.

View of the exhibitions on the ground floor.



