

## *THESIS ABSTRACT:*

### *THE ART DÉCO IN ALCOY. Contemporary derivations*

Art Déco was an artistic movement of Western culture which flourished mainly during the years between the two World Wars of the twentieth century. This work is a study on the Art Déco which developed in Alcoy at that time. The central element of Art Déco in Alcoy is the Bridge of San Jorge. This bridge, built between 1925 and 1931, is a major urban viaduct which became a powerful element in the development of the city. It was one of the first reinforced concrete bridges built in Spain, but, in addition to its advanced technology and urban values, it is one of the few examples of civil engineering with a formal Art Déco language. In order to better understand its context, its derivations and influences, it will be necessary to extend the scope of this analysis to establish the context in which Art Déco developed in Alcoy. Thus, the present study will consist of three parts, in order to explain this artistic production:

#### *PART I*      CONTEXT

**T**o start, the characteristics of Art Déco will be illustrated: how this movement was generated and what its development was, so to understand the attitudes of those involved in it. All those events that involved the transition to modernity from the old styles after the social acceptance of the avant-garde, fit in what we today may understand as Art Déco. The professionals' attitudes towards it were very diverse and covered a long scope whose endpoints ranged from traditional positions defending the use of projective academic methods, but still accepting a new formal language, to extremely rationalist positions which abhorred anything that would not be subjected the power of the functionality. From the Industrial Revolution, the unstoppable productive activity gradually filled every-day life with commodities. These items helped to change radically and progressively western lifestyles. The presence of these industrial objects, which functionally solved every-day problems, were a decisive influence on the acceptance and popularisation of machine aesthetics.

It is possible to address the historical evolution of Art Déco by means of being aware of the power of everyday commodities had. This study is not an exhaustive study of historical events and their impact, but it is rather intended to outline the cultural and aesthetic environment in which this artistic phenomenon unfolded, in order to establish a general context in which Alcoy can be included. We will later focus in the Spanish context. Neither will this tour an exhaustive one, but it will suffice to understand the social impact of Art Déco in Spain. To do agree specify the conditions in which he was the city of Alcoy and society that lived there.

Once the general aspects of Art Deco have been considered in this descending and approaching order to the bridge of San Jorge, it will be the moment to look at what kind of bridges were being built at the time. Thus, comparison will help us understanding the uniqueness of the bridge.

## **PART II\_** THE BRIDGE OF SAN JORGE

**T**his part will focus on the San Jorge Bridge viewed from three different perspectives

The first will be from the historical account of this constructive adventure, from its beginnings to its inauguration and commissioning. Thus the reasons for the appearance in Alcoy of the construction company and its evolution will be introduced, together with the history of the designers, the analysis of their technical project and the chronological sequence of both the project and the work itself.

From the second, it will be essential to know in detail the figure of the Navarrese architect Victor Eusa and his responsibility within the project and the formal result of the Bridge.

From these two premises, the qualitative analysis of the bridge will be addressed: how it was perceived, what its presence did to the urban landscape, what the impressions produced on the visitor who experienced it were, and then leading into a further analysis, using some conceptual parameters on its uniqueness. The elements of its formal composition will be studied and this analysis will also refer to the common formal characteristics of Art Déco and other contemporary experiences of previously discussed bridges.

## **PART III\_** THE DERIVATIONS

**S**uch an impressive building, with this Art Déco formal language must have caused a major influence in the city. In this third part the result of this influence will be presented, by means of tracking other works that were carried out immediately after - some of which orchestrated by the same characters, but some others also as a result of other interventions that contributed to the immediate development of Art Déco in Alcoy.

Since 1977, the city of Alcoy promoted some significant urban projects that consolidated various areas of the city with a common street furniture. The study of the elements of this furniture will allow us to observe behavioural characteristics from Art Déco. In a way, these elements constituted the development of Art Déco over an extended period of time as a significant expression of collective urban identity, only recently assumed.