

## **'El Salto Dam-Bridge and Power Plant, El Carpio, Spain' podcast**

### **French-Spanish couple of bird watchers**

We have come here to watch the birds, because there is a very interesting reservoir with the dam. There are many different species of birds.

Admittedly, when we came here for the first time, we were surprised to see that the style was neo-Arabic, neo-Mudejar, as we did not expect that for a dam.

It was a quest by the architects. It is reminiscent of the local architecture, of the Moorish architecture around here.

But it is really surprising and it is very beautiful, it really recalls the arches, the arcades when you visit the mosque in Cordoba or in many towns which still have such Moorish fortified gateways.

### **Observation by Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico**

Opened in 1922, El Salto was the work of the architect Casto Fernández-Shaw Iturralde in the small town of El Carpio on the banks of the River Guadalquivir.

The mammoth undertaking included a dam-bridge and a power plant, built to meet the province of Cordoba's growing need for electricity.

### **Rafael Lorente Muñoz, El Carpio town council**

People who live in a place often do not really know what is there. We spend a great deal of time travelling abroad and visiting places, and ignore the things we have nearby. That rather applies to the dam.

I think the dam is really beautiful. It is slightly overlooked and we should do more to make it better known.

When we take groups to visit the region, they love the dam because it is really beautiful to see.

### **Catarina Pernão, dancer**

I was not expecting it to be so beautiful!

I was expecting something very industrial and in fact, it is almost a historic monument.

It reminds me perhaps of castles, of the old castles of Moorish architecture.

I would say that it is older than it is.

### **Observation by Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico**

The dancers Catarina, Miguel de Sousa and Carlo Schiavo discovered the dam-bridge during a dance project.

### **Carlo Schiavo, dancer**

In fact, it is striking from afar as you do not see the details.  
And afterwards, as you are approaching the building, the architectural design is striking.  
But in that regard, you see that it is more recent than the idea that the building wanted to give.

### **Miguel de Sousa, dancer**

The vocabulary used by the architect and thus by everything surrounding the bridge is strange as it reminds me Othello, because I believe that it was the first time of my life that I saw, that I read or I heard the word 'Moor', or the Moorish style, the Moorish Revival.  
I feel I have seen or found the arches in certain churches there, and the State where I came from in Brazil is known for its churches.

### **Observation by Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico**

If the architect from Madrid was known for his work in a true futuristic style, he chose to call on historic forms here, reminiscent of the artistic heritage of Cordoba, the nearby former Umayyad capital.

### **Désiré Benavides Baena, Mayor of El Carpio**

I believe that they sought to factor in the neighbouring city of Cordoba, and which stands out in Moorish art for its mosque and its different history, for its cultural history.

I believe that the architect of the bridge and of the Castro Fernandez power station wanted to reflect that. In a certain way, the arches, the domes, this elephant which is so oriental have brought the Arabic world to the banks of the river here, to El Carpio. Yes, I believe that it was an intentional choice and a very good one at that.

### **Observation by Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico**

The bridge itself, built entirely in concrete imitating worked stone, is supported by seven buttresses, one of which rises up and straddles the bridge with a horseshoe-shaped arch as a large gateway over the causeway.

Every feature of the gateway evokes the imposing architecture of Al-Andalus.

### **Désiré Benavides Baena, Mayor of El Carpio**

Its structure, decoration and other features make it an important engineering feat nationally and internationally. Its initial impact was in the field of producing electricity and later on the town.

We are aware of its importance nationally and internationally, and we consider it one of the town's landmarks.

It is not only a dam whose purpose is to produce power, but it is also a very beautiful building.

It is in the neo-Mudejar style. I think that great care was taken with its aesthetics as it is in a magnificent setting and surrounded by a very beautiful natural landscape. It had to contribute something to its surroundings. I think that nobody can fail to be impressed when they see the power plant and the dam-bridge.

The buildings are well looked after. I personally believe that they command beauty, that great care was taken with their construction and structure, and that they are a real triumph.

#### **Observation by Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico**

We are now going to see the power plant that is several kilometres from the bridge.

#### **Rafael Lorente Muñoz, El Carpio town council**

We can see the Moorish influence in many of our buildings and I believe that the power plant is part of it, with details that are really similar to Moorish architecture.

#### **Observation by Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico**

The concrete power plant is topped with several domes; and its façade, decorated in blue ceramics, has the added feature of several windows. There is one overlooking a remarkable balcony supported by a carved large elephant's head.

#### **Raffaella Cardenas Bernal, Deputy Mayor of El Carpio**

Apart from its architecture and arches, the elephant is what strikes me most about this building. The elephant symbolises power, the energy of this power station.

I think that is what really represents this building, it creates this energy.

#### **Rafael Lorente Muñoz, El Carpio town hall**

When, as a child, I saw this balcony with the elephant's trunk for the first time, it impressed, really impressed me. It thought it was marvellous and very modern architecture.

I was mesmerized. I understand it has won a prize.