

# ARCHITECTURE COMPETITIONS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG WOMEN ARCHITECTS. THE CASE OF THE COMPETITION FOR RURAL SUBSIDISED HOUSING AND THE CANARIAN MAGÜI GONZÁLEZ, 1981-85

## LOS CONCURSOS DE ARQUITECTURA COMO OPORTUNIDAD PARA JÓVENES ARQUITECTAS. EL CASO DEL CONCURSO DE VIVIENDA PROTEGIDA EN EL MEDIO RURAL Y LA CANARIA MAGÜI GONZÁLEZ, 1981-85

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### Abstract

The Spanish democratic transition (1975-1982) was a time when architecture competitions with open and anonymous participation gradually began to appear, a phenomenon that coincided with the progressive incorporation of women architects into the discipline. The first part of this article analyses the situation of these competitions by studying their repercussions in 16 Spanish professional architectural journals belonging to both consolidated and emerging Spanish Architects' Associations. The participation of women architects is also analysed in order to assess whether these competitions were a source of professional opportunities for them. In the second section, the article studies the Competition for Architectural Solutions for Officially Subsidised Single-Family Housing in Rural Areas (1981-83), a nationwide call with the most significant participation of

architecture professionals (more than 1.000) and with a notable number of selected proposals by women architects. This study shows that women architects working in peripheral areas of the Spanish territory had a special presence in this competition, with the Canary Islands being the most remarkable case, for both the good results of its female participants and its ultra-peripheral location. Among the participating women architects, Magüi González stands out for the quality of her proposal and for being the only female professional who eventually obtained a commission from this competition. Finally, the investigation focuses, from a compositional, constructive and design culture perspective, on González's final built project: 30 dwellings in Juan Grande in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (1983-85), which was, indeed, her *opera prima* and was eventually awarded an important regional architecture prize.

**Keywords:** history of women; women architects; architectural journals; architecture competitions; rural housing; social housing; Spanish democratic transition; Spanish architecture; Canary Islands.

## Resumen

En España, la transición democrática (1975-1982) fue el periodo en el que poco a poco comenzaron a convocarse concursos de arquitectura con participación abierta y anónima, un fenómeno que coincidió con la progresiva incorporación de las mujeres arquitectas a la disciplina. La primera parte de este artículo analiza la situación de estos concursos valorando, para ello, su repercusión en 16 revistas profesionales de arquitectura españolas vinculadas a los Colegios Oficiales de Arquitectos tanto consolidados como emergentes. También se estudia la participación de las mujeres arquitectas en ellos para valorar si los concursos publicados supusieron un área de oportunidad profesional para ellas. En su segunda parte, el artículo profundiza en el Concurso de Soluciones Arquitectónicas de Viviendas Unifamiliares de Protección Oficial en el Medio Rural (1981-83), el certamen de ámbito nacional con la mayor participación de profesionales (más de un millar) y que también contó con un notable número de propuestas realizadas por arquitectas. Este estudio demuestra que las mujeres arquitectas que trabajaban en zonas periféricas del país tuvieron una especial presencia en el concurso, siendo Canarias el territorio más destacado, tanto por los buenos resultados de sus arquitectas como por su condición ultraperiférica. De entre las diversas participantes, la arquitecta Magüi González destaca por la gran calidad de su propuesta y por ser la única que logró obtener un encargo derivado de dicho concurso. Por último, la investigación se centra, desde una perspectiva compositiva, constructiva y proyectual, en la obra finalmente construida por González: 30 viviendas en Juan Grande, en Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (1983-85), proyecto que de hecho fue su *opera prima* y que acabó recibiendo un importante premio regional de arquitectura.

**Palabras clave:** historia de las mujeres; arquitectas; revistas de arquitectura; concursos de arquitectura; vivienda rural; vivienda social; transición democrática española; arquitectura española; Islas Canarias.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Architect Magüi González García (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1953) is one of the pioneer Spanish women architects from the Canary Islands. She graduated from the School of Architecture of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in 1978 and developed her professional career in parallel with her academic activity as a design studio professor at the School.

Magüi González started working in the transition period, from the end of the Francoist regime to the current democracy (1975-1982). Her case is an example of how young women architects began to work at a time when new job opportunities were opening up thanks to the new impetus that anonymous and open architecture competitions were getting in Spain. Her *opera prima*, 30 Social Housing Units in Juan Grande (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1983-1985), was a commission derived from the most relevant architectural competition in the democratic transition, the call for Architectural Solutions for Officially Subsidised Single-Family Housing in Rural Areas, in 1981.

This article analyses the situation and evolution of architecture competitions in Spain during the change brought about by the arrival of democracy, and studies whether this change was a real opportunity for new generations of women architects to start practising the architecture profession.

## 2. ARCHITECTURE COMPETITIONS IN SPAIN, 1969-1996

In the Spanish architectural context, the years of transition from the end of Franco's dictatorship to the consolidation of a democratic state (1975-1982)<sup>1</sup>

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1. For this period of Spanish history, historians determine different chronologies according to certain relevant milestones, choosing in this case the one that runs from the death of the dictator on 20 November 1975 to the elections of 28 October 1982, when a party from the democratic opposition rather than from the Franco regime came to power. However, for the chronological study by year included in the graphs of this text, the transition is framed between 1 January 1976 and 31 December 1982.

were the stage for numerous changes, including a significant increase in the number of calls for architecture competitions, which coincided in time with the progressive incorporation of women into the architectural profession. As is well known, the number of women architects has grown enormously since the 1970s, being 19% of the new female graduates in public schools of architecture in the 1980s and reaching parity in the mid-1990s (Pérez-Moreno & Santos Pedrosa, 2020).

Architecture competitions became an opportunity for young architects to get commissions. Different kinds of calls were usually published in professional architectural journals. These competitions helped to alleviate shortcomings detected in Spain, like the provision of schools<sup>2</sup>, to resolve critical points in the urban layout<sup>3</sup> or to meet new programmes of needs, like the headquarters of the emerging Colegios Oficiales de Arquitectos, (Professional) Architects' Associations, or simply AAs<sup>4</sup> and other administrative headquarters of regional and state public bodies. Many architects in the profession, therefore, hoped that architecture competitions would become not only an occasional job opportunity, but also a regular source of work<sup>5</sup>.

In parallel, architecture professional journals experienced a real flowering, which peaked at the end of the 1980s. These journals were ideal for announcing competition calls and further comments on proposals, award

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2. The most relevant was the Competition for Architectural Solutions for Schools, held in 1979 to implement school prototypes throughout the country (Concurso de Centros Escolares (I), 1979; Concurso de Centros Escolares (II), 1979).

3. Like the Competition for the Development of the Sector of the Basilica of *San Francisco el Grande*, *Puerta de Toledo* and the Fish Market, in Madrid (Ezquiaga, 1982), or the Seafront Promenade in Sada, Galicia (Concurso de estudios de Remodelación..., 1978).

4. Numerous competitions were held regarding this type of institution: headquarters for Autonomous Communities, like Valencian Community and Murcia (1978), Galicia (1980) or Extremadura (1981), and branch offices, like the ones in the provinces of Barcelona (1976) and Burgos (1979).

5. In an article in the journal *El Croquis* in 1982, Antonio Vélez Catrain (1944–) lists the virtues and obstacles that plagued the few architecture competitions existing at the time, expressing his wish that more of them be promoted in order to turn them into a real source of work for young architects (Vélez, 1982).

submissions, and authors. Gradually, a growing number of women architects joined these competitions. With the publication of the juries' opinions and the best-evaluated proposals in specialised journals, they began to make their work visible. However, submissions to architecture competitions rarely turned into official commissions. Hence, the research question is: Did the growth of architecture competitions turn into real opportunities for women architects?

The professional journals of architecture are a relevant source for assessing the presence of women architects in competitions. In Spain, there was a period from 1975 to 2008 when the professional journals belonging to the AAs were numerous, reaching the peak of publications in 1989, with 13 different journals coexisting simultaneously<sup>6</sup>. Before 1975, the only existing ones were the long-established *Arquitectura* (1918) of the AA of Madrid and *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo* (1944) of the AA of Catalonia. Figure 1 presents the progressive increase of professional architectural journals from 1969 to 1996, when the number of publications stalled at eleven and started to decline<sup>7</sup>. It can be noted that the number of journals published simultaneously rose to seven publications in the democratic transition and to thirteen in the 1980s. Journals like *Obradoiro* (1978), of the AA of Galicia, *Aldaba* (1980), of Aragon, *AQ Arquitectura* (1981), of Eastern Andalusia, *Basa* (1982), of the Canary Islands, and *Oeste* (1983), of the COA of Extremadura, among others, belonged to peripheral areas of the country.

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6. This singular phenomenon was associated with the new Spanish territorial model adopted in the democratic years, which brought the progressive decentralisation of the AAs into minor entities in each region. Almost every new AA had its professional journal.

7. From 1996 to 2008, these journals only decreased to 9. However, after six years of economic crisis, in 2013, the only remaining professional journals were the ones that first appeared, those of the AAs of Madrid and Catalonia.

Architecture Competitions as an Opportunity for Young Women Architects: The Case of the Competition for Rural Subsidised Housing and the Canarian Magüi González, 1981-85

Figure 1. List of the 16 professional architectural journals analysed from 1969 to 1996 and percentages of women architects whose published work is a competition entry

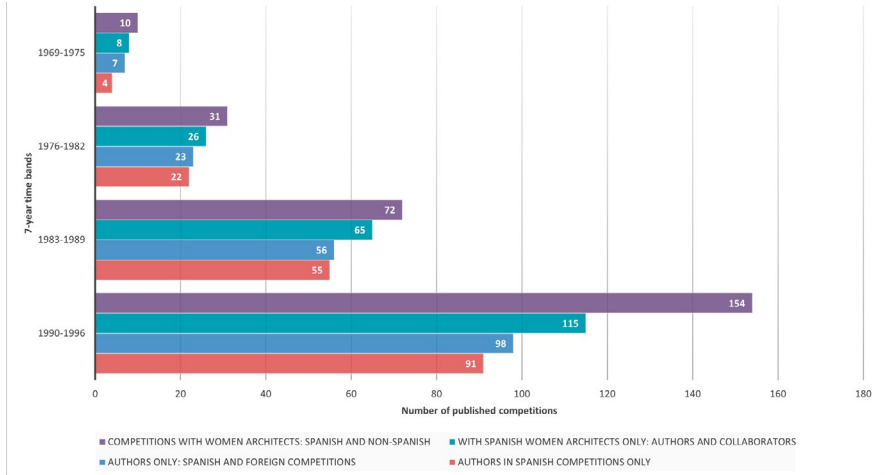
| JOURNALS FROM THE OFFICIAL ASSOCIATIONS OF ARCHITECTS (OAA)   | LATE FRANCOISM |        |        |        |        | TRANSITION |        |        |        |        | LAST 7 YEARS OF THE EIGHTIES |        |        |        |        | FIRST 7 YEARS OF THE NINETIES |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|---|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|   | 1969           | 70     | 71     | 72     | 73     | 74         | 75     | 76     | 77     | 78     | 79                           | 80     | 81     | 82     | 83     | 84                            | 85     | 86     | 87     | 88     | 89     | 90     | 91     | 92     | 93     | 94     | 95     | 1996   |
| <b>ARQUITECTURA</b><br>OAA Madrid   | Yellow         | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow     | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow                       | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow                        | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| <b>CUADERNOS DE ARQUITECTURA (QUADERNS)</b><br>OAA Catalonia  | Grey           | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey       | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey                         | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey                          | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   | Grey   |
| <b>ARQUITECTOS</b><br>Higher Council of Architects Assoc. in Spain                                  |                |        |        |        |        | Yellow     | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow                       | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow                        | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| <b>OBRADOIRO</b><br>OAA Galicia   |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>ALDABA/BLOC</b><br>OAA Aragon & La Rioja   |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>A.Q. ARQUITECTURA</b><br>OAA Oriental Andalusia  |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>BASA</b><br>OAA Canary Islands   |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>OESTE. Revista de Arquitectura y Urbanismo</b><br>OAA Extremadura                                |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>COFA CERO</b><br>OAA Asturias  |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>ARQUIMUR</b><br>OAA Murcia   |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>URBANISMO</b><br>OAA Madrid  |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>DOCUMENTOS DE ARQUITECTURA</b><br>OAA Oriental Andalusia - Almeria Branch                        |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>BAU. Revista de Arquitectura, Urbanismo, Arte y Diseño</b><br>COA Castile and León               |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>D'A. Revista baleare d'arquitectura</b><br>OAA Balearic Islands                                  |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>CATÁLOGOS DE ARQUITECTURA</b><br>OAA Murcia  |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>DAU. Debats d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme</b><br>OAA Catalonia - Llerida Branch                     |                |        |        |        |        |            |        |        |        |        |                              |        |        |        |        |                               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ARCHITECTS IN THESE JOURNALS WHOSE PUBLISHED WORK IS A COMPETITION ENTRY</b> | <b>33%</b>     |        |        |        |        | <b>39%</b> |        |        |        |        | <b>38%</b>                   |        |        |        |        | <b>43%</b>                    |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |

Source: Authors, 2023

Architecture competitions were relevant in these professional journals, as did the women architects who participated in them. From the democratic transition on, at least 38% of the women whose works appear in these journals did so through architectural competitions. A quantitative analysis of the competitions in which women took part published in professional journals shows that the participation of women architects in these competitions increased over time. In the last decade of Franco's regime (1965-1975), professional journals published ten architecture competitions where women architects took part. This number increased to 31 during the years of democratic transition (1976-1982), and to 226 in the following years —72 competitions from 1983 to 1989 and 154 from 1990 to 1996 (Figure 2). Some of these

competitions were for building in Spanish territory, others were abroad, and both Spanish and foreign women architects participated.

**Figure 2.** Architecture competitions published in Architects Associations professional journals with female participation, 1969-1996



Source: Authors, 2023

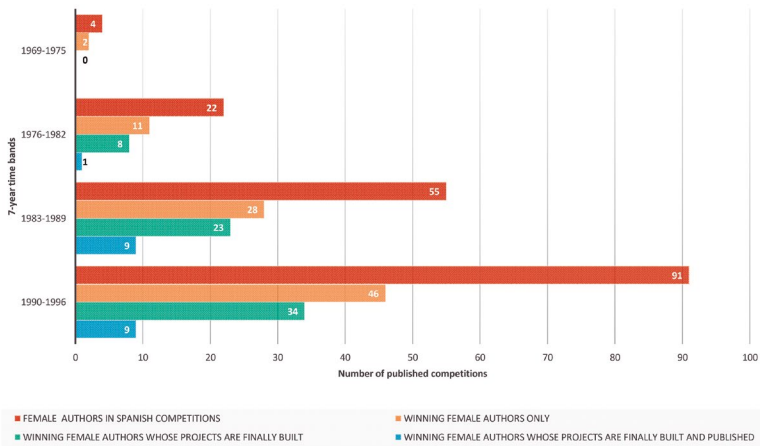
As Figure 2 presents, the democratic transition was a turning point for women architects who participated in architecture competitions and showed their proposals published in professional journals. It was a period with many competitions that called for the participation of hundreds of architects, Spanish and foreigners, men and women. The competition with the highest participation rate was for Architectural Solutions for Officially Subsidised Single-Family Housing in Rural Areas, celebrated in 1981<sup>8</sup>. It had 772 proposals submitted, all of them by Spanish architects. At that moment, the country had around 12,000 registered architects (CSCAE, 1986), which implies that 9% of the country’s architects (men and women) participated in it.

The following architecture competitions with the highest participation were: the competition for the Madrid Islamic Cultural Centre (1979), with

8. From now on, we refer to this architecture competition as ‘Rural Subsidised Housing’.

461 proposals (219 by Spanish architects); the aforementioned Competition for Architectural Solutions for Schools, with 142 proposals; the Ideas Competition for the Civic Centre of *La Vaguada*, in Madrid (1980), with 129 proposals; and the fifth one, the Competition for Preliminary Designs for the New Building of the Association of Architects in Burgos, known as the *Casa del Cubo* (1979), with 120 proposals.

**Figure 3.** Architecture Competitions published in Architects Associations professional journals with female authors and winning-participation, 1969-1996



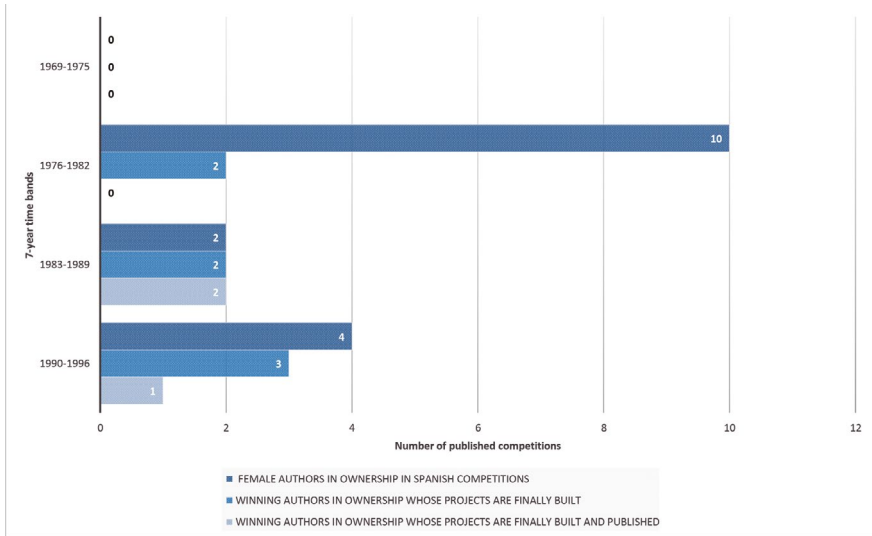
Source: Authors, 2023

In these years, around half of the submissions with women in the teams won the calls, in particular, 11 out of the 22 architecture competitions of this period (Figure 3). This trend continued in the following years, where 28 out of 55 architecture competitions celebrated in the 1980s were won by teams with women architects in them, and 46 out of 91 in the 1990s. Indeed, most of them were finally built: 73% of the winning proposals in the democratic transition, 82% in the 1980s and 74% in the 1990s. Moreover, the democratic transition is the historical period when women architects who led their private architectural practices (without male architect colleagues) won



more architecture competitions<sup>9</sup>. Of all the winning submissions designed by women architects working in ownership, ten were celebrated from 1976 to 1982, two from 1983 to 1989 and four from 1990 to 1996, even though the number of women in architecture steadily increased. However, of the ten winning submissions between 1976 and 1982, only two of them were finally built, other two were built between 1983 and 1989, and three between 1990 and 1996 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Architecture Competitions published in Architects Associations professional journals with female winning-participation working in ownership, 1969-1996



Source: Authors, 2023

9. From now on, we use the term ‘in ownership’ to refer to those women architects who ran their private architectural practices alone or in the company of a female partner, excluding those who shared leadership with other male architects. The term ‘female authors’ includes both women working in ownership and those sharing leadership with male architects. These two terms do not comprise those men and women who worked as salaried employees or collaborators and, as such, do not participate as co-owners of the practice or appear as co-authors of the projects.

Of the ten winning proposals in the transition years, eight of them responded to the most popular architectural competition of the period: the competition for Rural Subsidised Housing—the other two were proposals submitted to the Garden Competition held in the Community of Madrid in 1981 (Noticias, 1982, p. 7)<sup>10</sup>. This competition called for proposals for housing designs in multiple locations along all the Spanish territory. Magui Gonzalez's proposal was one of the winning submissions for the Canary Islands. Although the project was not finally built, it was decisive for her first commission and built project.

### 3. A MASSIVE COMPETITION: THE CASE OF THE RURAL SUBSIDISED HOUSING

The competition of the Rural Subsidised Housing was created after the Royal Decree 1614/1981 of July 3, 1981, on the public promotion of subsidised housing in rural areas and the complementary measures of Royal Decree 1156/1982 of May 14, 1982. With these documents, the Spanish State recognised that the uniqueness of the rural environment, its architecture and the lives of its inhabitants, required singular regulatory measures to differentiate its subsidised housing developments from those in the city. The Directorate General of Architecture and Housing, the ministerial body responsible for housing and organiser of the competition (DGAV), recognised that «the current situation of rural settlements [was] the consequence imposed by a social, architectural and town planning policy, aimed at achieving interests alien to those of the men and women affected»<sup>11</sup> (Mingo & Velasco, 1983a, p. 28), and that the competition could be an ideal starting point to halt a

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10. In June 1982, the City Council of Madrid called for an open competition to construct and consolidate 35 garden areas in the city. Two of the 30 winning entries (5 areas were declared void) were designed by women architects: the park Vallecas Villa, by Nora Alicia Bozzini Bacigaluppo (who also participated in the competition for Rural Subsidised Housing) and the Plaza de las Regiones gardening, by María Luisa Bujarrábal Fernández.

11. Translation by the authors. Original quotation: «La situación actual de los asentamientos rurales es la consecuencia impuesta por una política social, arquitectónica y urbanística, dirigida al logro de unos intereses ajenos al de los hombres y mujeres afectados».

process of modernisation without criteria, which was leading to the deterioration and «homogenisation of the traditional habitat [...] alien to the social and cultural singularities» (p. 28)<sup>12</sup>. The basis of the competition was to enhance and update the traditional type of rural single-family housing to adapt it to the new needs, even aspiring to stop the exodus of the population from rural areas to the cities.

### 3.1. Competition Rules and Rewards

The competition was a public, open and anonymous call. Anonymity allowed the selection of submissions on equal terms for all participants, which implied a fair opportunity for architects who were not linked to the promoting bodies with decision-making power. The anonymous competition contributed to an equal evaluation of the submissions by emerging professionals and, among them, to the growing number of women architects. It represented, therefore, a change concerning the Franco's years, when the non-regulation of the question of anonymity coexisted with the frequent appeal to direct commissioning (Muñoz, 2000)<sup>13</sup>. It was not until 1984 that the anonymity of those participating in competitions became compulsory, thanks to the Internal Regulations of the Architects Associations (Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, 1984).

The proposals were not linked to a specific site, as the competition sought to set the typological guidelines for future residential housing interventions in the selected rural areas throughout Spain<sup>14</sup>. The authors of the winning submissions got 100,000 pesetas and the commission fees for a

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12. Translation by the authors. Original quotation: «La homogeneización del hábitat tradicional es ajeno (sic) a las singularidades sociales y culturales».

13. After Franco's regime, in the transition years, there were also counterexamples, such as the Competition for Architectural Solutions for Schools (1979), where anonymity was dispensed with by requiring the work teams to include a curriculum showing their previous experience in the construction of school architecture—according to Lluís Domènech Girbau in an opinion article in the journal *Arquitectura*, of the AA of Madrid, on the occasion of the decision and publication of the chosen proposals (Domènech, 1979).

14. The 50 provinces that make up the 17 autonomous communities of Spain. The autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla are attached to the province of Malaga, in Andalusia.

basic design. However, there was no compromise to build the winning projects. Still, the organisers celebrated the event, curating modest regional exhibitions, publishing a catalogue depicting the winning designs (DGAV, 1983) and explaining the whole competition process<sup>15</sup>. As this call covered the entire national territory, the response was tremendous, mobilising 772 Spanish architectural firms. The organisational efforts implied the creation of 50 provincial juries and one national jury. The selected proposals were 178 out of the 772 ones submitted after a complex selection process. In the first phase, the provincial juries had to choose between 6 and 12 of the submitted entries for their respective region; in that phase, the number of the shortlisted proposals was 393<sup>16</sup>. Of these, the national jury had to choose up to four proposals per province: they finally selected 141 of them, awarding mentions to a further 23 (two of which were out of competition). Finally, the DGAV awarded 14 additional preliminary designs. All these resulted in the 178 proposals commissioned for further development into base designs and consequently published in a catalogue of housing solutions for rural areas.

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15. This is the case, for example, in the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, whose AA hosted the corresponding exhibition with the submitted proposals for this area in June 1982.

16. The lists of the provincial juries were not published, so it is impossible to know if they had female participation in them. What is known is that every province had a jury of at least five members each. As for the national jury, a committee of 8 members chaired it, all men: Antonio Vallejo Acevedo, managing director of the DGAV, Gerardo Mingo Pinacho as secretary and José Carlos Velasco López (both representatives of the DGAV), Francisco Riesgo Paesa (of the Instituto para la Promoción Pública de la Vivienda), Joaquín Cores Uría (from the Higher Council of Architects Associations in Spain or CSCAE), Efrén García Fernández (Ministry of Territorial Administration) and, by appointment of the participants of the competition, Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza (2nd in votes) and Antonio Vázquez de Castro (7th in votes). They were chosen after five of the architects most voted by the participants in the competition excused from attending or resigned; the ones that did not want to be part of the jury were the architects Rafael Moneo, Alejandro de la Sota, Antonio Fernández Alba, Julio Cano Lasso and Luis Peña Ganchegui. This fact is striking, although it could be interpreted as a possible sign of disaffection with the type of competition.

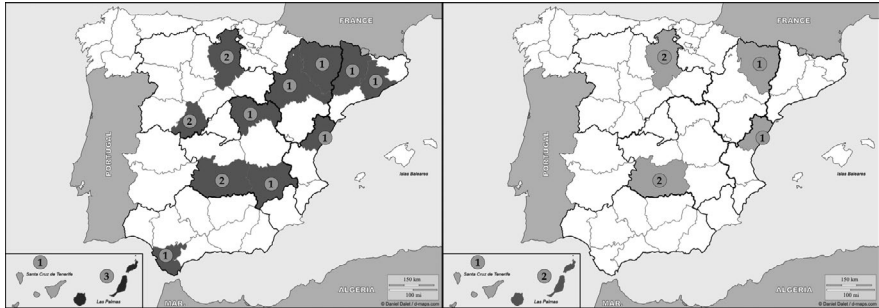
### 3.2. Women Architects' Participation and Excellence

The exact number of women architects who officially attended the competition is still undetermined, as a complete list of the participants was never published. Nevertheless, the exhibition catalogues are relevant for analysing female and male participation. More than 1000 architects submitted 772 entries. The catalogue includes the names of 248 authors of the 178 selected submissions, of which 10,1%, 18 submissions, have female architects in the team. Half of these entries were submitted by women working with men, and the other half by women working in ownership, eight by independent architects and one by two architects working in an all-female team: these constitute 5.05% of the selected entries. By contrast, the 113 participating freelance male architects constitute 63.5% of the selected entries, and 47 (26.4%) were designed by all-male teams. These data illustrate the huge gender difference of the participants.

Notwithstanding, the participation of women working in ownership, working alone or in association with other women, was remarkable. A comparison with the second biggest competition of the democratic transition, the Madrid Islamic Cultural Centre (Notas Breves, 1980; Union Internationale des Architectes, 1980), provides interesting data. The call for the Madrid Islamic Cultural Centre gathered 400 Spanish architects belonging to 219 firms. In this case, the percentage of women architects working in ownership descends to 0.99%, a value 5.66 times lower than the Competition for Rural Subsidised Housing. The latter attracted the participation of firms from practically all over Spain. The criterion of selecting a maximum number of four proposals according to provinces leads to a higher number of selected entries in the autonomous communities composed of more provinces: Castile and León, and Andalusia. Figure 5 presents the geographical distribution of the selected entries in which women architects participated. The scenario shows that the areas where women architects excelled were decentralised. No proposals for women architects in the Madrid region were selected. In contrast, the interior regions of Castile La-Mancha, Castile and León and Aragón stood out with ten women architects, the peripheral regions of Catalonia, the Valencian Community and Andalusia with four, and the ultra-peripheral region of the Canary

Islands also with four proposals designed by women architects, three of them working in ownership. This data, indeed, made this region the most successful one in terms of female leadership.

**Figure 5.** Geographical location of the selected entries with female authorship, grouped by provinces. Left: women + men architects; right: women architects in ownership



Source: Authors, 2023

This geographical pattern resonates with the media coverage of the competition in professional architectural journals. While the national journal of the CSCAE, *Arquitectos* (Concurso de Anteproyectos..., 1982), published the list of architects selected by the national jury, grouping them by provinces, the journals of the rest of the AAs published articles about the proposals related to their territories. It is the case of the journals of the AA of Aragon and *Aldaba* (Concurso de soluciones arquitectónicas para viviendas situadas en medio rural, 1982), the Canary Islands and *Basa* (Concurso de la vivienda rural, 1982), Extremadura and *Oeste* (Concurso: Vivienda rural, 1983) and Eastern Andalusia and the journal *AQ Arquitectura* (Proyectos premiados en el concurso sobre vivienda rural en Andalucía Oriental, 1984)<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, the journals of the main focuses of architectural debate,

17. It should be noted that this topic is published in the first issues of these journals, when in some cases, they still needed a definitive name, as in the case of the journals *Basa* in the Canary Islands and *AQ Arquitectura* in Eastern Andalusia. Outside the strictly architectural field, the preliminary projects of several provinces were collected in the journal *Informes de la Construcción*, belonging to the Higher Centre for

the cities of Madrid and Barcelona, did not devote a single article or review to the competition for Subsidised Rural Housing—the winning women architects, therefore, found in the non-historical and non-central journals a more favourable environment for the visibility of their work.

In 1983, the final catalogue of solutions comprised a total of 178 proposals, including ‘selected’ and ‘distinguished’ submissions throughout Spain, which had been developed by the architects up to the level of the base design. In the terms and conditions of the competition for Subsidised Rural Housing, the aim was to encourage the continuity of the commitment of the chosen architectural firms so that the awarded authors would be involved in the transition from the base design to the executive design and construction management to achieve their architectural solution. Figure 6 shows the identity, region and the women architects who participated in the competition. It also shows that almost 80% of the women involved in the competitions with good results—with selected proposals and proposals with mentions—were under 30 years old; this is relevant data which indicates that the competition was an opportunity for young women architects that were aiming to build and develop a career in the country.

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Scientific Research (Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) [CSIC] (Mingo & Velasco, 1983b).

Figure 6. List of Spanish women architects in the competition for Subsidised Rural Housing

| Competition for Subsidised Rural Housing      |  |                    |                 |                                    |        |                           |                 |
|---|--|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|-----------------|
|   | Name and surname<br><i>(male colleagues)</i>                                       | Age<br>(Oct. 1981) | Graduation year | Result                             | Level  | Autonomous Community (AC) | Projects per AC |
| Women architects in ownership                 | María Isabel Correa Brito  | ≤ 25               | 1981            | Selected                           | 2      | Canary Islands            | 3               |
|   | María Luisa González García  | ≤ 30               | 1978            | Selected                           | 1      | Canary Islands            |                 |
|   | Dolores Figueredo Delgado<br>Beatriz Mariño Casillas                               | ≤ 30<br>≤ 30       | ?<br>1978-9     | Selected                           | 4      | Canary Islands            |                 |
|   | Emilia Bisquert Santiago   | ≤ 45               | 1965            | Selected                           | 4      | Castile La-Mancha         | 3               |
|   | Nora A. Bozzini Bacigaluppo  | ≤ 45               | 1966            | Selected                           | 3      | Castile La-Mancha         |                 |
|   | Elvira Garrido-Lestache  | ≤ 30               | 1977            | Selected                           | 3      | Castile-and León          | 1 (+1)          |
|   | Marina Escribano Negueruela  | ?                  | ?               | Distinguished (out of competition) | -      | Castile and León          |                 |
|   | Isabel Gandarias Carmona   | ≤ 25               | 1980            | Selected                           | 4      | Valencian Community       | 1               |
| Carmen Vielba Cuerpo                          | ≤ 30   | 1980               | Selected        | 4                                  | Aragon | 1                         |                 |
| Women architects working with male colleagues | Carme Pinós i Desplat<br><i>(Enric Miralles Moya)</i>                              | ≤ 30               | 1979            | Selected                           | 4      | Catalonia                 | 2               |
|   | Gemma Tarragó i Sala<br><i>(Jordi Bellmunt I Chiva)<br/>(Eduard Bru i Bistuer)</i> | ≤ 30               | 1979            | Selected                           | 1      | Catalonia                 |                 |
|   | Nieves Calvo Burgas<br><i>(Santiago Cristóbal Porras)</i>                          | ≤ 35               | 1974            | Selected (out of competition)      | -      | Castile and León          | 2               |
|   | Ana Estirado Gorriá<br><i>(Fernando Magdalena Layos)</i>                           | ≤ 25               | 1981            | Selected                           | 3      | Castile and León          |                 |
|   | Adelaida Esteve Campillo<br><i>(Francisco G<sup>o</sup> Germán Cruz)</i>           | ?                  | ?               | Distinguished (out of competition) | -      | Castile La-Mancha         | 1(+1)           |
|   | Ángeles Gonzalo Refusta<br><i>(Vicente Bernaldo de Quirós)</i>                     | ≤ 30               | 1977            | Selected                           | 4      | Castile La-Mancha         |                 |
|   | Bárbara Carolina Petriñi Glez.<br><i>(Manuel Jesús Martín Hdez.)</i>               | ≤ 30               | 1980            | Selected                           | 4      | Canary Islands            | 1               |
|   | María Rosa Navarro Ariza<br><i>(José Luis Pérez Sanz)</i>                          | ≤ 30               | 1977            | Selected                           | 3      | Andalusia                 | 1               |
|   | Isabel García Elorza<br><i>(Manuel Fernández Ramírez)</i>                          | ≤ 35               | 1971            | Selected                           | 3      | Aragon                    | 1               |

Source: Authors, 2023



Gerardo Mingo Pinacho and José Carlos Velasco López, architects of the DGAV and technical directors of the competition, concluded that «the architect culturally trained in the Modern Movement [assumed] better the maritime and Mediterranean typologies than those of the inland plateau, signifying the Mediterranean origin of modern architecture» (Mingo & Velasco, 1983a, p. 29)<sup>18</sup>. In this sense, the prior evaluation of the provincial juries allowed the selection of proposals through a better knowledge of their capacity to adapt to each local rural environment. The evaluation criteria established in the competition rules prioritised the functional, environmental, climatic, socio-economic, cultural and constructive suitability, the flexibility-adaptability achieved by the solutions, and their aesthetics (Mingo, 1983, p. 42). In their final selection, the national jury applied a rating system for the submissions, assigning 0 to 100 points depending on their quality<sup>19</sup>. Those submissions below 50 points were not selected or mentioned as they did not reach the minimum suitability criteria. Level 4 was for those submissions between 50 and 60 points; Level 3 was for those between 61 and 70; Level 2 was for submissions between 71 and 80; and Level 1 was for those with a score higher than 80 points; which was only achieved by 10% of the submitted entries.

Among all the regions in Spain, the case of the Canary Islands stands out: having two provinces with four selected submissions each, they included the participation of women architects in 50% of these submissions, 75% of them designed by women architects working in ownership (even including one exclusively female team): in the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the proposal by Maribel Correa and, in Las Palmas de Gran

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18. Translation by the authors. Original quotation: «El arquitecto culturalmente formado en el movimiento moderno asume mejor las tipologías marítimas y mediterráneas que las de la meseta interior, significando el origen mediterráneo de la arquitectura moderna».

19. The scoring system implemented by the national jury left as many as 30 provinces with less than the four eligible proposals per province established by the competition rules. There were 10 of these provinces with only one selected proposal.

Canaria, those of Magüi González, Bárbara Petrini and the all-female team of Dolores Figueredo and Beatriz Mariño. Among them, the entry by Magüi González stands out as it was the only assigned Level 1. On the official date of publication of the competition notice (October 1, 1981), all these women architects were under 30 years old and had graduated no more than three years earlier (Figure 6).

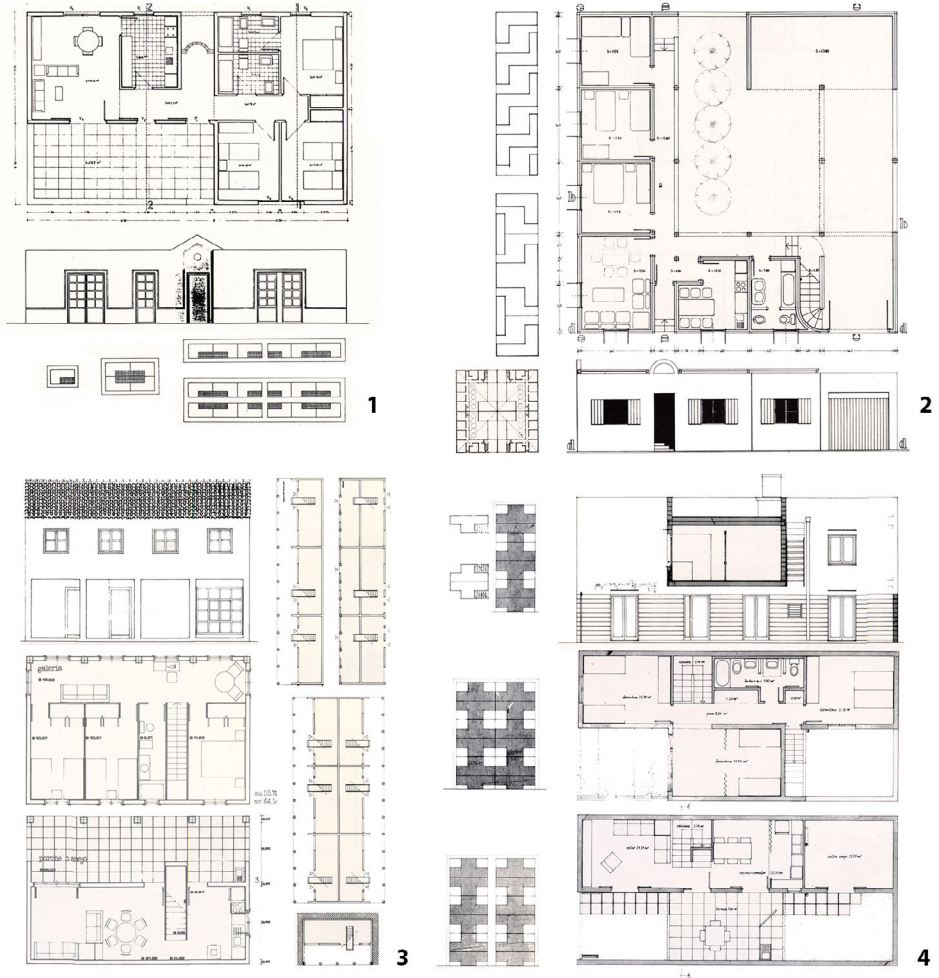
### 3.3. Selected Preliminary Designs in the Canary Islands

The four Canarian solutions with female authorship are diverse: the housing units are resolved on one or two floors, with linear or L-shaped distributions, with different compactness and flat or sloping roofs. Nevertheless, it is possible to find similar features in all (Figure 7). The constructive and structural simplicity stands out, adapted to the local availability of certain materials (proposing, for example, vibrated concrete load-bearing walls in all four cases), with remarkable control over the spans, in the case of Maribel Correa's proposal, and assuming the possibility of self-construction, in the cases of Correa and González's designs.

All of them proposed versatile configurations or groupings, considering the different combinations of housing units (detached, semi-detached, in rows or various blocks) and the different topographical situations in the islands, with proposals adapted to sloping terrain, in the case of Petrini's proposal, and local typological variants in González's alternative version with cave-houses.

The proposals share a particular concern for the relationship between the interior and exterior of the housing unit, resolved with the figure of a patio-terrace in Mariño and Figueredo and Correa's designs, a porch with an upper gallery in González's proposal, or without it in Petrini's one, as well as with the study of the discontinuities of the building envelope—both the patio and the porch abound in local rural architecture references and are the scene of meeting and social activity. Likewise, all the proposals resort to joinery for doors and windows whose configuration, material and proportion recall the vernacular types of the Canary Islands.

Figure 7: Selection of Canarian proposals with authorship by women architects in the competition for Subsidised Rural Housing: All-female team of 1) Beatriz Mariño Casillas and Dolores Figueredo Delgado; Tandem of 2) Bárbara Petrini González; and independent proposals of 3) Magüi González García and 4) Maribel Correa Brito



Source: DGAV-MOPU, 1983

In such tight solutions in terms of constructed area and cost, the articulation and significance of these openings serve as an identifying feature for the housing units. This is why the main access is underlined with some gesture: using a formal postmodern nod, in the cases of Petrini, Mariño and Figueredo's proposals; a discontinuity in the volumetric organisation in the case of González's one; the projection of the staircase volume at right-angles to the facade and the overhang of the upper floor above the entrance in the case of Correa's. Some proposals also included a volume destined for typical activities of the rural environment in the form of a shed in Petrini's design, an optional annexe in González's, or an 'agricultural hall' in Correa's. The inclusion of green elements in the courtyards, expressed with trellises for climbing plants in Correa's and rows of trees in Petrini's design, or even the control over the chromatism of some aspects in González's proposals are also strategies for better identification with traditional rural solutions in the islands.

Magüi González's proposal was to implement interior areas of Gran Canaria, her native island. Its archetypal aesthetic echoed the agricultural sheds or barns commonly used in the Canarian archipelago, called *alpendes*. The traditional residential unit had two floors, with a maximum usable area of 90 m<sup>2</sup>, a limit imposed by the competition rules and intended for a family of six people. The housing units were grouped in linear patterns with two different configurations: single rows of houses and pairs of rows facing opposite directions. Her proposal also allowed local typological variants, like the aforementioned cave house type, which was very common in mountainous areas of the island, like Tejeda and Artenara. She showed her concern about the interaction between the inside and outside of the house without losing the ability to control the temperature: she addressed these concerns by including a porch topped by an upper gallery—a feature also found in Canarian rural architecture—and by exploring discontinuities in the envelope, whose configuration, size, materials, and techniques were reminiscent of Canarian vernacular solutions. The covered walkway served as a space for social gatherings and activities, encouraging children to play, sew, and do other handicrafts, as the architect explained in her project description (González, 1983). However, the proposal also offered the option to omit the porch if an annexe for rural activities was required instead.

Given their small surface area and the tight budget set by the competition rules, the structure and prominence of the main entrance served as an identifying feature for the dwellings: González disrupted the continuity of the envelope by designing a staircase that protruded from the facade, determining the position of two direct access routes to the living room and kitchen. The project description set out the architect's intention to seek chromatic solutions—green, red ochre, light brown and white on walls and carpentry—that would allow the houses to blend into the rural environment more convincingly.

Unfortunately, none of the proposals was finally built in the Canary Islands or the Spanish Peninsula. Once the initiative was delegated to each province's regulatory bodies, the continuity of the process was interrupted. However, there were two exceptions, in Granada and the Canary Islands.

The former benefited two male architects, and the latter benefited one young female architect.

The council and municipal housing board from the province of Granada «commissioned projects by the conditions of the competition, with only one prototype of the selected ones being developed», as mentioned in *AQ Arquitectura*, the journal of the Association of Architects of Eastern Andalusia (*AQ Arquitectura*, 1984, p. 11)<sup>20</sup>. We have located this project, consisting of 51 dwellings in Alhama de Granada, designed by the men architects Francisco Ibáñez Sánchez and José Ibáñez Berbel and completed in 1989: the main characteristics of the dwellings correspond to the selected entry in the competition by these same authors (Ibáñez & Ibáñez, 1994). Meanwhile, the government of the province of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria decided to develop a social housing project two years after the competition, and the same year, the catalogue was published. To do that, they commissioned a project similar to the winning proposal designed by Magüi González, which turned out to be her *opera prima* (Delgado Baudet, 2022): 30 social housing units in Juan Grande, a rural town in an undeveloped and agricultural area in the south of Gran Canaria, which she began to design in 1983. According to the architect herself, this was to compensate for the failure to build her winning project in the competition.

#### 4. A BUILDING BY A YOUNG WOMAN ARCHITECT: 30 SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS IN JUAN GRANDE (LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA), 1983-85

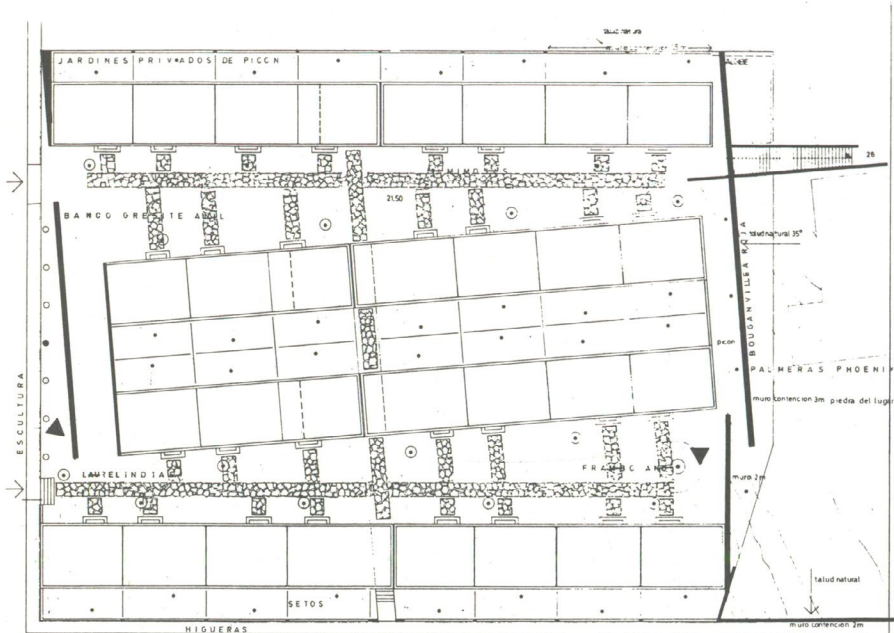
The villa of Juan Grande extended from the former road, which linked the east coast towns to the north and south poles of Gran Canaria, the capital city and the main touristic area of the island. The site revealed an impoverished and barren interior land, 30 metres above sea level and exposed to

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20. Translation by the authors. The initiative of Granada is also mentioned in *Informes de la Construcción*, a journal published by the CSIC (Mingo & Velasco, 1983b, p. 9). Original quotation: «realizó el encargo de unos proyectos, acogándose a las condiciones del concurso, desarrollándose sólo excepcionalmente algún prototipo de los seleccionados».

wind and sun. There was no immediate context, as the plot was located on the town's border, limited by a street on the western side and a slope on the eastern side. In her design, Magüi González revisited the layout of two-storey houses in the kind of rows she proposed in the competition and paid particular attention to the connections between the interstitial spaces separating each row, as well as to the boundaries of the site. This time, a flat foot replaces the gable roof with the Arabic tiles of the competition proposal. The final project also added rear courtyards and gardens for each housing unit.

Figure 8. 30 social housing units in Juan Grande, province of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, by Magüi González: general plan



Source: Architects Association of the Canary Islands, 1987

The layout of the development (Figure 8) featured four housing rows: two rows with eight houses each were positioned on an NNE-SSW axis and flanked the remaining two central rows of seven houses each. The courtyards in the exterior rows were oriented towards the landscape at the northern and southern borders of the site. The central rows were attached by their courtyards and were positioned at a slight angle to the other rows. This diagonal orientation created tension between the central and the exterior rows, preventing the emergence of deep parallel corridors between them. They also promoted large, landscaped passageways which linked to the access routes. Besides, the rows and the eastern slope protected these areas from the frequent winds. A transverse passageway, running from side to side, disrupted the continuity of the rows and linked opposite ends of the development.

The eastern side was flanked by a retaining wall made from local stone. At the opposite end, the houses met the access road: to give this 'main entrance' a representative character, the central rows were recessed to give space to a square, where the paths between the housing rows met despite the harsh conditions of the area. González revisited the former idea of creating a gathering space for social activity. The covered walkway proposed in the competition was replaced by an open square, protected on three sides by the housing rows and enclosed on the west side by a continuous stone bench with a colonnade of seven cylindrical concrete columns (Figure 9). These columns were topped with 'guardian' steel sculptures made by the artist Carlos Peleteiro, who frequently collaborated with González. This sum of features dignifies the space in connection to the street and the rest of the town.



**Figure 9.** 30 social housing units in Juan Grande, province of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, by Magüi González: gathering area at the entrance. Left: as published in 1987; right: as photographed in 2023

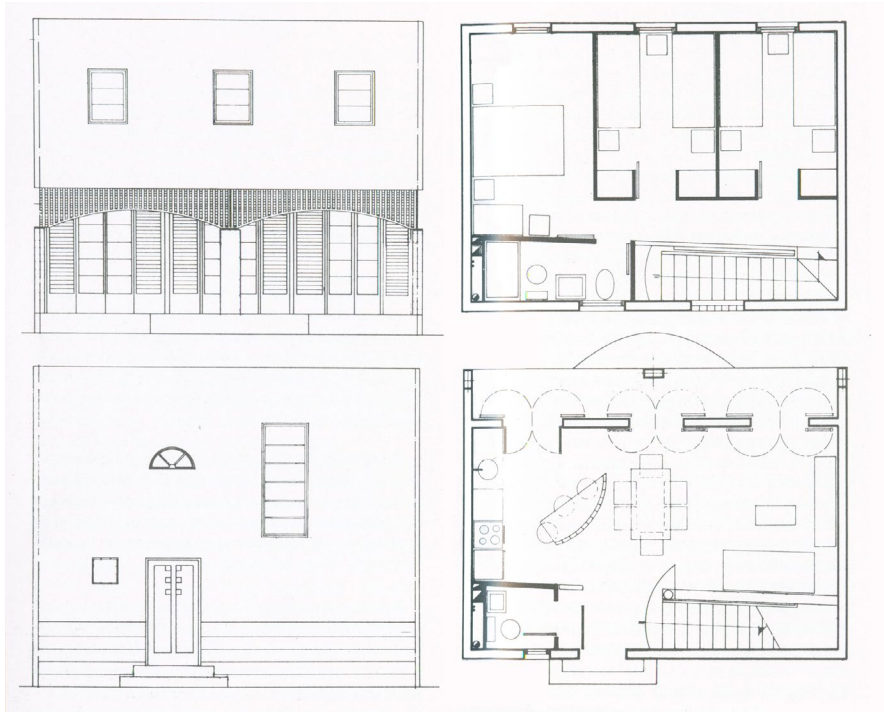


Source: Architects Association of the Canary Islands, 1987 (left); María Rodríguez Cadenas, 2023 (right)

The elongated volumes of the housing rows, with ochre facades featuring controlled, uniform voids, blended satisfactorily into the surrounding landscape. Here, González had the opportunity to develop her interest in establishing green spaces and using local plant species. The eastern end of the development was finished off with Canary Island palms, and the retaining wall was topped by red bougainvillea, which served as a backdrop for the passageways. In the access areas, the architect alternated Indian laurels and Royal Poincianas, which grew very tall and shaded the gathering area and paths. Finally, González enclosed each rear courtyard with a lower wall reminiscent of the windbreaks used in local banana plantations and inserted a fig tree inside each one to enable or prevent direct sunlight from the south, depending on the time of year. Except for the access routes, Magüi Gonzalez

selected flagstones for the ground and *picón* stones for the courtyards. This very inexpensive local volcanic aggregate retained moisture and protected the substrate.

**Figure 10.** 30 social housing units in Juan Grande, province of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, by Magüi González: standard model floor plans and front and rear elevations



Source: Architects Association of the Canary Islands, 1987

The Spartan layout of the houses (Figure 10), with three bedrooms on the first floor and a single living, dining and kitchen space linked to a porch on the ground floor, did not preclude the use of subtle strategies to streamline the interiors. One example is the slightly slanted line of the staircase—no longer free-standing as in the competition but attached to the entrance—and the partitioning of the bathrooms, which broke the monotony of the

interior divisions. It allowed the bathrooms to be made larger and avoided the excessive narrowness of the upper floor corridor. The articulation of the entrance to the ground-floor bathroom mitigated its position next to the house's front door. A curved partition highlighted the visual separation between the kitchen and the living room, replacing the task assigned to the staircase in the competition. This opaque curved partition, which in the published plans seems to be solved with glass bricks, also served as furniture (Figure 11). The ground floor was connected to the enclosed courtyard via large voids in the facade, which was set back from the first-floor volume to create a shaded outdoor porch. The configuration of the houses in the development enabled cross ventilation in the indoor spaces. Meanwhile, sunlight reached the entrance through a grid of small square glass holes in the main door but was attenuated in the opposite facade with louvred shutters in front of the glazed access doors and an 'arcade' of indigo-tinted wooden latticework, which was reminiscent of the vernacular architecture.

**Figure 11.** 30 social housing units in Juan Grande, province of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, by Magüi González: streamlined interior spaces, despite the tight budget in social housing. Left: entrance area; right: curved partition with integrated furniture



Source: Architects Association of the Canary Islands, 1987

The low budget for the social housing development did not stop Magüi González from successfully adopting solutions that produced a more prosperous result, such as the inclusion of small artworks—like Peleteiro's proposals—the interplay of voids and colours on the facades and the evocation of vernacular elements in the carpentry or the courtyard lower walls. In this sense, it is also worth mentioning the improvement of the interior and exterior areas of the houses with specific details that enrich the otherwise monotonous layout solutions, such as the whole treatment of the foot of the staircase (landing steps, handrails, newel posts and caps) and the partition between the kitchen and living room (Figure 11); the curved landing step to the courtyard; the balanced pattern of diverse windows in the front facades; and the latticework on the rear ones. Currently, as part of a self-building process similar to that observed at the PREVI houses in Lima, the uniformity of the elevations, the spaces between the rows, and the courtyards have disappeared and been colonised by successive extensions that have altered the volumetry of the development and transformed the access routes into narrow open corridors (Figure 12).

Figure 12. 30 Social housing units in Juan Grande, province of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, by Magüi González. Top: Southern facade with the latticework arcade as published in 1987; bottom: the current state is determined by the self-construction process



Source: Architects Association of the Canary Islands, 1987 (top); María Rodríguez Cadenas, 2023 (bottom)

In 1985, Magüi González won first prize for her *opera prima* in the II Manuel de Oráa y Arcocha Architecture Prize, a regional award by the local AA. The prize was awarded *ex-aequo* with Canarian architect Maribel Correa for her stationery and press logistics centre, a family-run business called *García y Correa S. L.* (Edificio García y Correa, 1987)—Maribel Correa was also selected in the competition for Rural Subsidised Housing among 32 other applicants. The jury of the Manuel de Oráa Awards included one woman, Maisa Navarro (professor of Art History at the University of La Laguna, specialised in architecture), together with Carlos Guigou (dean of the AA of the Canary Islands), Manuel Martín (professor of Architecture at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) and guest architects Álvaro Siza and Lluís Clotet. In the final report, the jury valued:

The adaptation of the work to the place, the landscape, the way of life and the local architectural culture, without falling into mimicry, as well as the ability to achieve a worthy work of architecture, appropriate to the limited constructive and economic means<sup>21</sup>. (Acta del Jurado, 1987)

Accordingly, Magüi González's award-winning project was published in the sixth issue (October 1987) of the professional journal from the islands, *Basa*, which gave visibility to her name and work (Pérez-Moreno & Delgado Baudet, 2023).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article raises the question of whether open and anonymous competitions were a source of opportunity for women architects. The first part of the article gives an overview of the situation of architecture competitions in the Spanish democratic transition, as well as in the years before and after, through the publication of these competitions in professional architectural journals. Its analysis confirms that there was a growing number of calls throughout Spain with the participation of women architects, so the possibility of considering it as a source of opportunity is accurate.

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21. Translation by the authors. Original quotation: «la adecuación de la obra al lugar, el paisaje, la manera de vida y cultura arquitectónica local, sin caer en mimetismos, así como la habilidad para conseguir una obra de arquitectura digna, adecuada a los medios constructivos y económicos limitados».

The second part of the article analyses a specific case, the most relevant competition of the Spanish transition period, which mobilised more than 1,000 architecture professionals and with numerous institutions involved in its development. Its study shows that the participation of women in it was high and excellent, as several projects designed by young women architects were rated as examples of good practices. It also shows that the excellence took place in decentralised areas of the Spanish territory, far away from its capital, Madrid, and, therefore, from the historical powers linked to architecture. In this situation, the Canary Islands was the most remarkable case, both for the good results of its female participants (three of them in ownership) and its ultra-peripheral location. However, the analysis also shows that the competition failed in a way. The construction of the 178 selected prototypes for Subsidised Rural Housing would have meant a clear advance in the planning and adaptation of rural areas in the 50 provinces of Spain. However, of the dozens of potential projects initially planned, only two turned out in actual buildings.

The third part of the article reflects the personal success of an outstanding woman architect, Magüi González who, despite the difficulties and complexity of the competition, had the possibility of developing her *opera prima* thanks to it. Her situation, although minoritarian and perhaps anecdotal, is an example of how a young woman architect, working in a peripheral region of the country, was able to start her professional career because of the existence of open and anonymous architecture competitions.

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