Tuesday, May 7th
Welcome reception at *Universidad Laboral de Gijón* – The 'ideal city' by Architect Luis Moya
For Delegates and Companions

On the first day of the congress, along with a **guided tour** of the architectural complex of *Universidad Laboral de Gijón*, Fig. 1, a **welcome cocktail** will be offered to the attendees starting at **19:30 h**.

Originally conceived as a mining orphanage and transformed during its construction into the *Universidad Laboral*, the building designed by architect Luis Moya was envisioned as a self-sufficient and self-contained ideal city. It even included a 100-hectare farm and was equipped to educate generations of workers' children into highly skilled professionals.



Fig. 1: The *Universidad Laboral de Gijón*.

Built according to the ideals of classical architecture, the centerpiece of this ideal city would be the grand central square, around which the magnificent Church, the Tower, the Theater, and the administrative buildings are arranged. Around this monumental heart of the city, the rest of the facilities unfold, among which the spacious halls constructed for vocational training workshops stand out, as shown in Fig. 2.

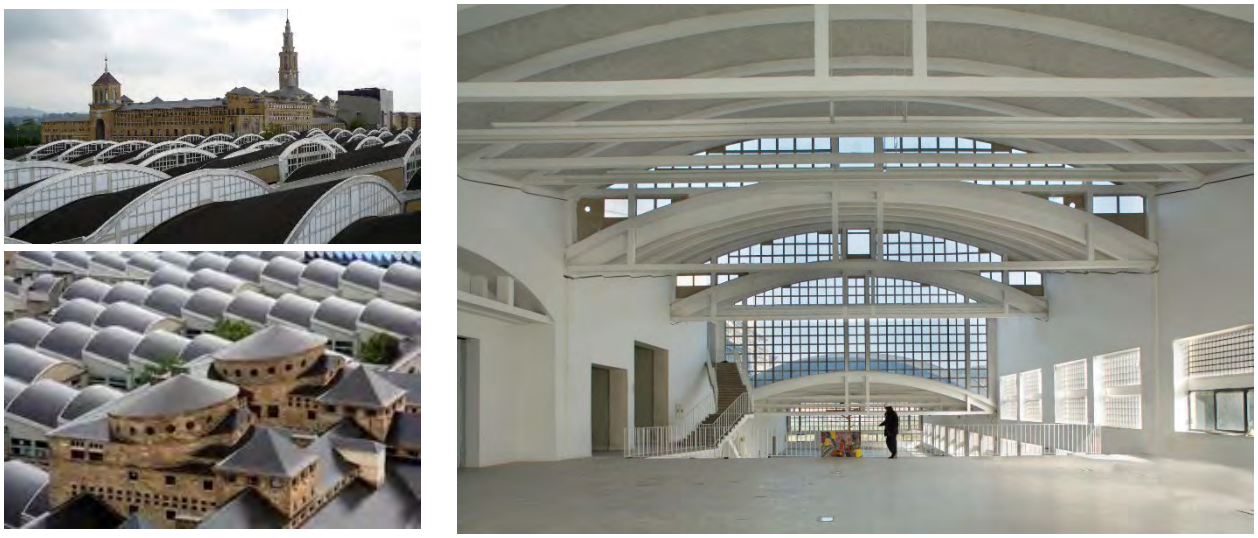


Fig. 2: Halls constructed for vocational training workshops.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The complex of buildings began construction in 1948, and the works continued for years until abruptly halted in 1957, following the sudden dismissal of the Minister of Labor, José Antonio Girón, the main driving force behind the Spanish labor universities. By then, the first students

were already attending classes at the institution in Gijón. In the 1980s, the *Universidad Laboral* became part of the National Institute of Integrated Education. Finally, in 2001, the Government of the Principality of Asturias took over the building and began designing an ambitious plan to breathe new life into the architectural complex. It was then conceived to overlay a new idea of a city onto Moya's ideal city, creating a center for cultural and creative production of the 21st century.

The renovation works began in 2005, giving rise to an art center created from some of the vocational training halls; a newly constructed studio, now housing the *Radiotelevisión* of the Principality of Asturias (RTPA); a spectacular library; the Corinthian atrium; the magnificent Auditorium, and thousands of square meters rehabilitated to accommodate various educational and cultural uses.

THE BUILDING

The building is constructed with its back to the city of Gijón. Luis Moya designed it in such a way that to access its interior, one would have to walk around it to appreciate it in all its magnificence. It follows the guidelines of the neo-Herrerian and neoclassical styles, characteristic of Francoist architecture. Among the most notable spaces are the following:

Corinthian atrium and central courtyard. Located behind the tower-gate, a rectangular courtyard opens in the manner of a Corinthian atrium, with granite columns, each ten and a half meters high, defining a warmly welcoming space thanks to a new glass roof, Fig. 3. After passing through the atrium, you access the central courtyard, which becomes a focal point leading towards the tower and the church, Fig. 4.

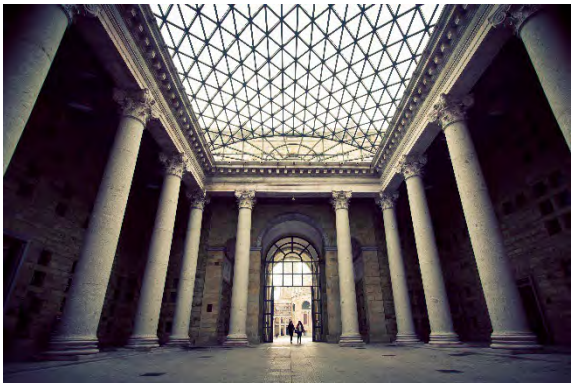


Fig. 3: Corinthian atrium.



Fig. 4: Central courtyard.

The **Church** is undoubtedly the most spectacular building in the architectural complex. With a surface area of around 900 m^2, it is one of the largest elliptical-plan churches in the world, as shown in Fig. 5.



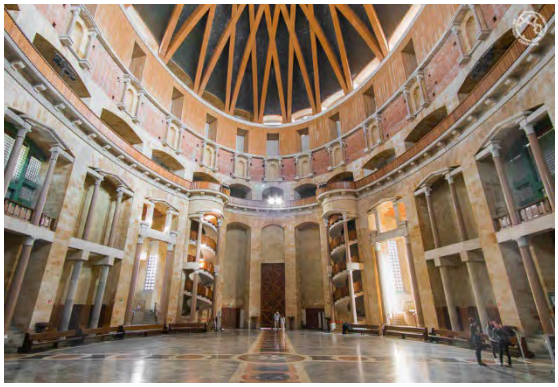


Fig. 5: Elliptical-plan Church of the *Universidad Laboral*.

The interior is covered by a dome with an estimated weight of 2300 tons, mounted on 40 intersecting brick ribs that support the structure, as shown in Fig. 6 and 7. The height from the ground to the beginning of the dome's arches is 25 meters, and it reaches 33 meters to the center of the oculus.

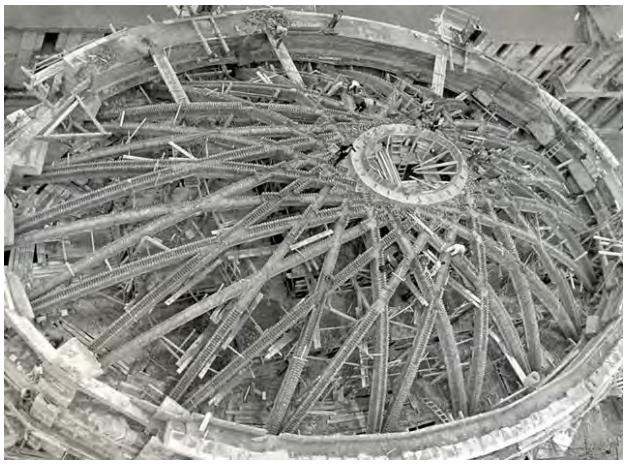


Fig. 6: Photograph taken during the construction of the dome.



Fig. 7: Elliptical dome.

The **Tower** is perhaps the most characteristic building of the Laboral, as it is the one that helps identify the City of Culture upon first visit. With a height of 130 meters, it is the tallest building in the Principality of Asturias, surpassing the tower of the Cathedral of Oviedo, and the tallest stone building in Spain, as shown in Fig. 8. On the seventeenth floor, there is an observation deck that offers a fantastic view of the Laboral complex, as well as the green and blue landscape surrounding the building, as depicted in Fig. 9. Attendees will have the opportunity to enjoy these views throughout the event.



Fig. 8: The Tower of the *Universidad Laboral*. Tallest stone building in Spain with 130 meters.



Fig. 9: The views from the observation deck of the tower are marvelous.

The **Theater** features a Hellenistic-style facade with dimensions similar to those of the Parthenon, as shown in Fig. 10. Originally conceived as a large auditorium for students and professors of the former *Universidad Laboral*, the venue has become one of the best in northern Spain in terms of space, capacity, and technology. It accommodates around 1500 seats distributed in the main hall, the boxes, and the amphitheater, as seen in Fig. 11. Additionally, there are seats in the rehearsal rooms, meeting rooms, and conference halls, increasing the seating capacity to 2000 spectators.

It was the first fully air-conditioned theater in Europe, featuring a revolutionary underground air distribution system. The front of the stage was adorned with a fresco measuring one hundred and twenty square meters titled 'Allegory of the Arts and Crafts', created by the Andalusian painter Enrique Segura. Unfortunately, this fresco is no longer visible today.



Fig. 10: Main entrance to the theater from the central courtyard.



Fig. 11: Interior perspective of the theater.

Special mention also goes to the **Painting Room** (*Sala de Pinturas*), where the congress welcome reception is planned to be held, as shown in Fig. 12. This space is located on the second floor of the theater, adorned with frescoes also by Enrique Segura, and has access to the balcony overlooking the central courtyard.



Fig. 12: Painting Room (Sala de Pinturas), the space where the welcome reception will be offered.