

MATADERO MADRID

Matadero Madrid: Culture as an element of transformation of the city.

1. Some History.

In the early twentieth century, the City Council decided to build a new slaughterhouse for the city. Its construction lasted from 1911 to 1925.

The location chosen for its construction was the dehesa (meadows) de Arganzuela, on the southern outskirts of the city, next to the river, with good accessibility and at a suitable distance from the city centre.

After years of operation, the natural growth of the city eventually engulfed the complex, which became a source of noise and unhealthiness for the new neighbourhood, and consequently the slaughterhouse was closed in 1996.

After its closure, different uses were proposed for it, but finally the City Council, after studies and extensive surveys, in 2004 decided to implement the project for a cultural centre dedicated to contemporary creation: MATADERO MADRID (by the way, matadero means slaughterhouse).



Aerial view. Early 20's



2006. Matadero and Madrid Río, before the works.

2. Matadero Madrid.

Matadero Madrid is part of a network of municipal cultural centres of different content - museums, theatres, libraries, etc. and territorial scope metropolitan, urban or local-.

Matadero Madrid would cover every type of arts, from, let's say, conventional arts (theater, music, literature, dance...) as well as visual arts or digital culture. Matadero would bring together different artistic emergent practices in search of interdisciplinary proposals, contributing to the renewal of ideas and artistic languages. For the public, Matadero would offer new cultural experiences, and, for artists, it would be a place for work, experimentation, exhibition and exchange of ideas.

Matadero also offered great possibilities for the city, due to its location at the confluence of the N-S axis that articulates the city and Madrid Río (a linear park built over an urban motorway that was buried and has completely transformed the river environment), and between two main districts of Madrid (Arganzuela y Usera).

The architectural interventions to convert the slaughterhouse into Matadero have had the same

experimental character as the rest of the artistic disciplines and have deserved numerous awards, both national and international.

Matadero Madrid is managed by the City Council, through the public

company Madrid Destino, and by other collaborating partners as well.



3. Effects of Matadero.

In terms of gentrification, the effect of Matadero has not been very significant, at least compared to that of Madrid Río, which transformed a very run-down area into a highly desirable urban space to live in, but there is no doubt about Matadero's success as an instrument of culture and a vehicle for social improvement for the neighbourhoods around it, through programmes especially dedicated to them. On the other hand, Matadero has served to place the southern neighbourhoods on the cultural and tourist map of the city (it is a must-see).

The emerging and most innovative and creative artistic activity is moving out of the city centre and Matadero has contributed greatly to this. In addition, the research and artistic creation programmes place Matadero among the most renowned contemporary art centres in Spain and abroad.

Matadero has also been a success from the point of view of cultural consumption. The programmes of theatre, music, dance, cinema and exhibitions are increasingly extensive

and has a wider audience, like the activities in the outdoor space, with festivals such as La Noche en Blanco or LuzMadrid, and fairs and markets.



4. Future.

Looking to the future, Matadero undoubtedly needs to expand its facilities, with, for instance, a large resource centre (workshops, sets, exhibition spaces, documentation center, etc) or new spaces for artistic residencies and, of course, it must continue and increase its cultural offer, trying to attract new partners.

The greatest challenge lies in managing future activity independently of the pressures or urgencies of the politicians in office, avoiding giving in to pressures to incorporate managers guided solely by commercial interests, with cultural proposals of little or no artistic interest.

Therefore, perhaps the greatest problem is the lack of a duly approved Master Plan, with the agreement of all the groups to ensure that future activities will be developed in accordance with the guiding principles of Matadero.

