

Alhambra and Generalife

Granada, Spain

Photographs by Alan Ward 2018

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

The Alhambra palace and the adjacent Generalife villa and gardens are sited on a plateau in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, over 130 meters above the modern city of Granada. Built on the site of an earlier Roman settlement, the Alhambra was the rural residence and fortress of the emirs, who ruled Muslim Spain from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. North of the Alhambra and Generalife lies the residential quarter of Albaycín (15), separated by a deep ravine and the Darro River. This palatine grouping and residential quarter from the medieval era are a result of Moorish town planning, architectural design and garden design. Remaining largely intact, there have been adaptations and additions, particularly in the Albayzín, with Spanish Renaissance and Baroque designs overlaid following the surrender of the Moors in 1492.* The gardens of Alhambra and Generalife, while also modified, retain the spirit of the original design.

Occupying a hilltop site and constructing a palace with gardens and fountains was made possible by building a dam and aqueduct in the mountains and channeling water to the site. In addition, run-off is captured and stored in cisterns below the palace, and through sophisticated hydraulics - water is raised up from the river below to the palace. The supply was sufficient enough to support the vision of a making an earthly paradise with pools and basins, jets, and runnels - activating and cooling courtyards and garden spaces. The Court of Lions at the Alhambra has a central basin of water and runnels dividing the court into four quadrants, symbolizing the four rivers and four gardens of Islamic paradise (2-6). At Generalife, the water is integrated into a planted landscape which originally included

orchards and vegetable gardens outside the walls, between the Alhambra and Generalife. (16-31).

My aim was to photograph the dynamic flow and magical properties of water in the garden - exploited with basins, runnels, and fountains in a variety of shapes and forms. While it is ever present and highly visible, particularly in the parabolic arcing patterns, the actual quantity of water is economized with small jets and relatively shallow pools. All photographic exposures are made with a selected amount of time to allow light to pass through the lens and shutter. Some exposures are a longer duration when there are cloudy conditions and limited light, so when photographing the water in arcing jets, it is recorded as continuous flow because of the relatively long exposures (23-25,29-31). Some shorter duration exposures made in full sunlight are quite revealing (26). The water in the photographs is seen disintegrating into blobs and droplets. Water exits out of the jets with some oscillations initially from the liquid core, which then becomes less stable causing the core to break up into blobs, which becomes increasingly more fragmented, and eventually some atomize with beneficial cooling effects (26). This is the physics of liquid jet disintegration from a small opening, that an exposure at around 1/250 of a second or less, reveals. This disintegration is only partially visible, because it merges most of the action into a more continuous flow, just as older motion pictures consist of a series of stills projected in rapid succession. There is an inherent beauty in the visibility of the fragmenting water in these frozen moments of photographic time.

List of Photographs

1. View of the Alhambra from the Generalife gardens
2. Court of the Lions, view toward Hall of the Kings
3. Portico of the Hall of the Kings
4. Fountain in the portico of the Hall of the Kings
5. Court of the Lions
6. Court of the Lions detail
7. Patio del Cuarto Dorado
8. Patio de Arrayanes
9. Patio de Arrayanes reflection
10. Jardin de Daraxa
11. Patio de la Reja
12. Jardines de San Francisco
13. Jardines del Partal
14. Palacio del Partal
15. View from the Alhambra to Albaycín
16. Path from entry along south side of Generalife
17. Fruit trees along wall of Generalife
18. Arbors in Jardines Bajos, Paseo de los Cipresses beyond
19. Fountains in Jardines Bajos
20. Hedges and fountains in Jardines Bajos
21. Fountain, runnel and pool in Jardines Bajos
22. Fountain detail in Jardines Bajos
23. Jardines Bajos and Patio de Descabalgamiento beyond
24. View east in Patio de la Acequia
25. View west in Patio de la Acequia
26. View east with high shutter speed
27. View west with moderate shutter speed
28. Portico in Patio de la Acequia
29. Upper garden Patio de la Sultana
30. Fountains in Patio de la Sultana
31. Fountain details in Patio de la Sultana
32. From upper garden, Patio de la Acequia, Alhambra on the left
33. Upper garden and Generalife villa
34. View from Generalife villa
35. Generalife amphitheater

















































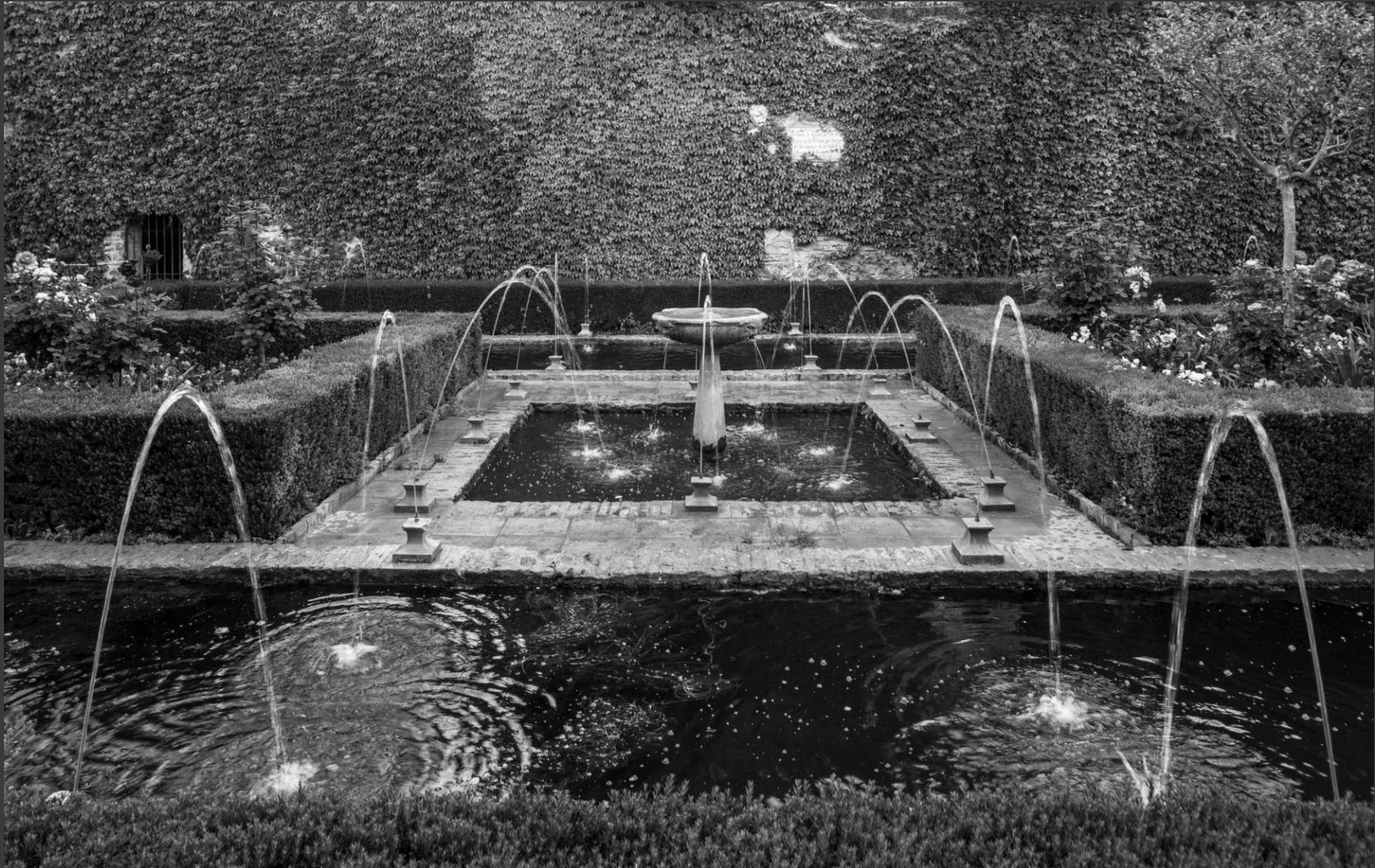






















Notes

* See the UNESCO World Heritage Listing

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