

CEMENT TILES, ORIGINS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSERVATION, 1873-1931

Jordi Griset Moro

Encaustic Cement Tile Specialist

Sitges, Barcelona, Spain | jogrimo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As a result of more than fifteen years of extensive research this study details the origins and use of cement tiles, Barcelona's most important manufacturers and their recommendations for conservation.

INTRODUCTION

Also known as cement hydraulic tile, hydraulic tile, hydraulic mosaic flooring and hydraulic flooring, Cement tiles are a handmade tiles made of cement mortar, moulded and pressed that, unlike ceramic materials, Do NOT NEED TO BE FIRED.

Created in Italy at the end of the XVIII century these tiles acquired importance in Viviers, France near the Lafarge cement factories and appeared in Spain in the mid 1800's.

In 1805, *Apolytomena* in Madrid already made artificial compressed marble and *La Progresiva*, of Bilbao, participated in the 1851 International Exhibition of London.

The most important factories in Barcelona were: *M. C. Butsems, Orsola, Solá y Cía.* and *Escofet, Fortuny y Cía. S. en C.*

METHOD

We compared the conservation recommendations published in the catalogues of these three factories in the period from 1873 to 1931:

M. C. Butsems & Fradera, 10 catalogues,

Orsola, Solá y Cía., 8 catalogues,

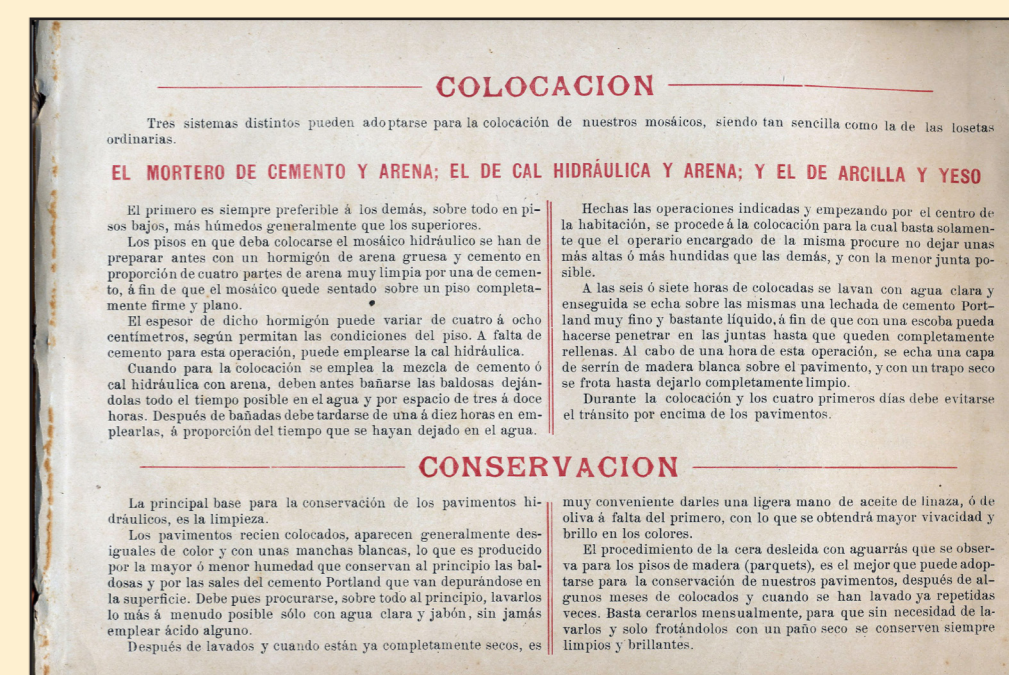
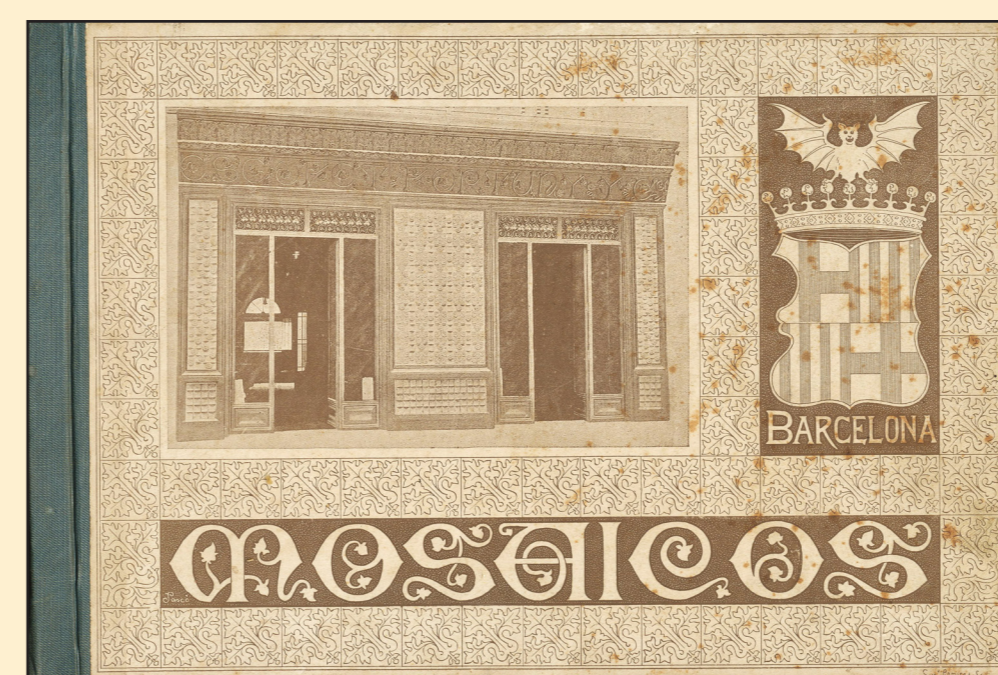
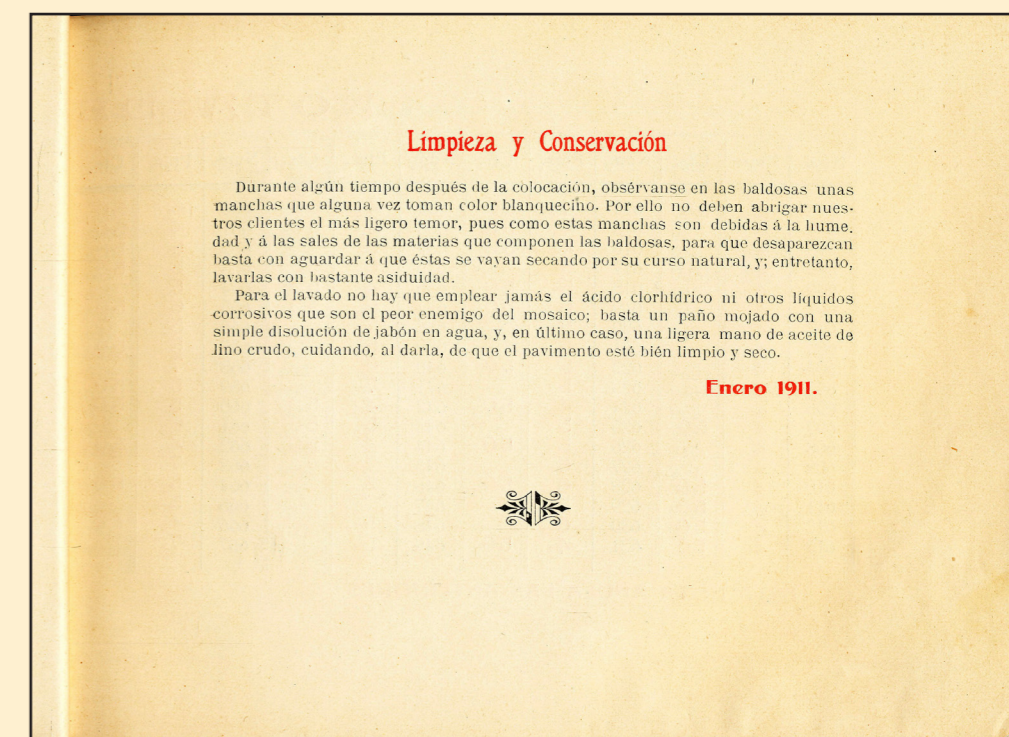
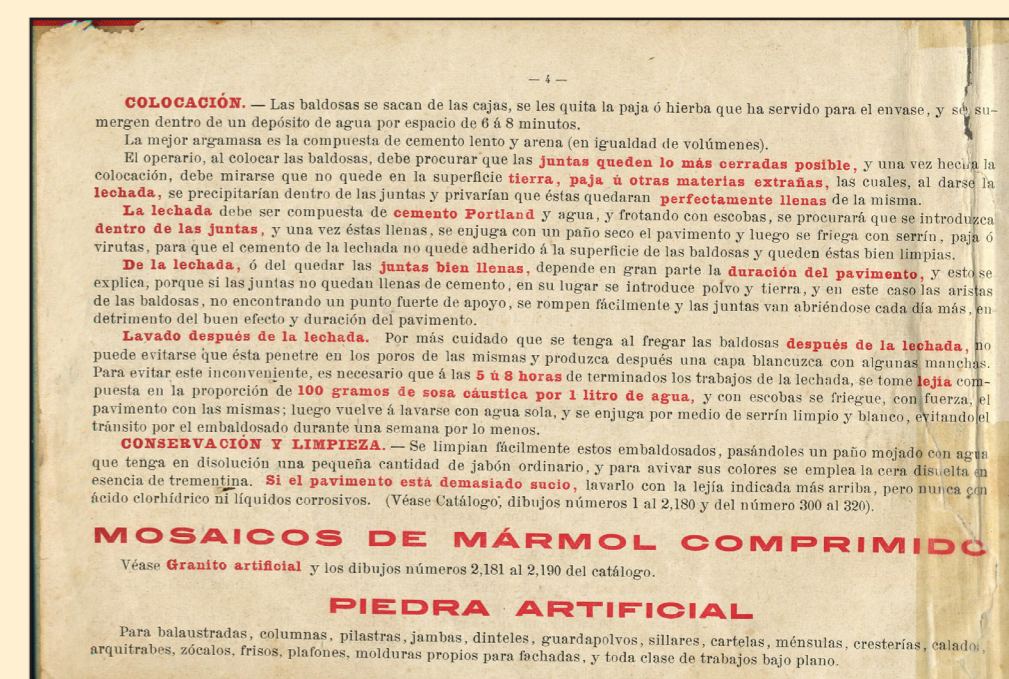
Escofet, Fortuny y Cía., 13 catalogues

SOME CATALOGUE TEXTS

BUTSEMS: Undated (probably before 1896): These tiles are easily cared for by using a damp with water containing a small amount of ordinary soap. To brighten their colours turpentine and polishing rag may be used.

ORSOLA: No date (probably before 1900): The materials that make up our tiles, harden in the water, therefore, the more they are washed the more they increase in strength and beauty. To clean them, a solution of soap and water is enough or water alone if they are not too dirty.

ESCOFET: 1888: To keep them clean wash every eight days with clean water or soap and water according to the state of the floor.



Catalogue *M. C. Butsems y Fradera*, 1897 · Catalogue *Orsola, Solá y Cía.*, 1911 · Catalogue *Escofet, Fortuny y Cía.*, 1891

CONCLUSIONS

For almost 60 years these three factories coincide in recommending the use of a cloth dipped in water with a small amount of neutral soap as the best method for cleaning the tiles and, in order to brighten their colours, a solution of flax or olive oil dissolved in turpentine applied with a polishing rag.

Currently there are products sold on the market, however, as they are relatively new, we have no experience of how they will react with the passage of time.

