

□ Phantom Brickworks: Antimetaphors of the Property Crisis in Spain

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Instructions for use:

To achieve a greater phenomenological experience, the author recommends reading this photo essay whilst listening to Bibio's ambient composition "Phantom Brickworks" (Warp Records, 2017) as background music. The music is available on the NTS YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08ctUR90WrM>

For history lovers, the toponym "Bailén" may sound familiar. It was in this Andalusian town, in 1808, that the Spanish resistance inflicted a first defeat on Napoleon's army in open battle. The contemporary history of the settlement and its population of 18,000 residents is at once less glorious and more dramatic. The material remains of the recent tragedy are scattered all around. Interspersed among the fields of olive trees, there lie abandoned factories, numbering by the dozen. Places that, during the boom years, were responsible for producing the "gold bullion" on which Spain entrusted its spectacular economic growth: house-bricks.

Type "Bailén" into the Google Maps search tool and, after activating the satellite view, what stands out most clearly is the reddish tone to the earth. Clay soils are prevalent in the region, and clay is the base substance used in the ceramics industry, bricks included. The Romans knew this first. They exploited the land for its rich resources, and were followed by centuries of Arab settlement during which novel techniques were developed

Keywords: antimetaphor; brickworks; housing bubble; industrial archaeology; modern ruins; Spain; 2008 financial crisis

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