



## Article

# An Analysis of Journalism Specialized in Art and Architecture in the Print Cultural Supplements of the Spanish Newspapers (1993–2018)

Marina Fernández Maestre

Faculty of Media and Communication Science Complutense, University of Madrid, 28040 Madrid, Spain; marinf40@ucm.es

**Abstract:** The present article examines journalism specialized in art and architecture in the print editions of the cultural supplements of three Spanish newspapers with the highest circulation in the country: *Babelia* (*El País*), *ABC Cultural* (*ABC*), and *El Cultural* (previously *El Mundo*, and currently, *El Español*) covering a twenty-five-year period. All three supplements consolidate visual arts and architecture into a unified section called *Art*. The main objective of this research is to analyze the *Art* sections, using the year 2018 as a case study and the twenty-five-year period (1993 to 2018) to investigate the evolution of cultural supplements. To undertake this study, I used the content analysis method. The results show a noticeable reduction in the length of the cultural supplements during the study period. This decline also entails a significant decrease in art content, with architecture severely affected. The conclusions of this study highlight the current precarious state of cultural supplements, the fundamental role of criticism, and the marginalization of architecture in these publications.

**Keywords:** specialized journalism; cultural journalism; cultural supplements; Spanish newspapers; architecture; art; culture; art criticism; architecture criticism



**Citation:** Fernández Maestre, Marina. 2023. An Analysis of Journalism Specialized in Art and Architecture in the Print Cultural Supplements of the Spanish Newspapers (1993–2018). *Journalism and Media* 4: 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia4010014>

Academic Editor:  
Andreu Casero-Ripollés

Received: 13 December 2022  
Revised: 17 January 2023  
Accepted: 19 January 2023  
Published: 30 January 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The cultural supplements analyzed in this paper, *Babelia* (*El País*), *ABC Cultural* (*ABC*), and *El Cultural* (*El Mundo* until 2022, when it began to be disseminated online by the digital newspaper *El Español* and distributed its print edition independently) were founded in the 1990s as a response to the growing demand for cultural content during that time in Spain. A new generation of readers enthusiastically welcomed the social openness established in a country that had already left behind the forty years of censorship of the dictatorial regime. Until Spain became a democracy in 1978, any cultural manifestation that did not agree with the postulates or interests of the regime was forbidden. It is essential to keep in mind that before the instauration of democracy, as professor Ramírez (2010) described: “The art system in Spain before 1975 was so precarious, so random and unpredictable, that we could hardly describe it as an interdependent, differentiated and openly consistent world” (p. 9). Understanding the art system as: “The set of agents that drive the functioning of all activities related to the art sector, from the creative sphere (artists, curators, critics), media (curators, critics, experts, press or publishing sector), economic (galleries, auctions, collectors, insurance), institutional (museums, biennials, grants) or material (transportation, exhibition mounting)” (San Martín 2018, p. 414).

Spain’s transformations in the 1980s were abysmal for such a short period. Not only in the Arts but also different areas, such as education, justice, economy, or territorial organization with the creation of the State of Autonomies. Remarkably, the cultural sector was completely reactivated: many artistic works were produced, and new events of international scope were organized. In the art system, it is worth mentioning the permanent transfer to Spain of Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* after forty-two years on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), the rise in the cultural phenomena *Movida*

madrileña, or the creation of the first international contemporary art fair called ARCO. Since then, the fair has attracted every year in February a varied number of figures from the art system (artists, gallery owners, collectors, critics, curators, journalists, etc.) and is widely covered by the media. For instance, the Spanish cultural supplements have consistently significantly increased the number of pages in the art section during the fair and the week before. *ABC* also publishes the journal entitled *ABC de ARCO* every day of the fair, expressly dedicated to the event (printed on the same paper as the supplement and the newspaper).

The creation of the state of autonomies also favored the development of the Spanish artistic fabric, which resulted in the proliferation of museums in the country in the late eighties and mainly during the nineties and early 2000s. As the historian and professor [Fusi \(1999\)](#) states, many of these buildings were born as: “New visual landmarks of their respective cities-responding to a true and genuine social demand for culture . . . and contributed, in turn, to create, in a relatively short time, a new cultural climate in the country” (p. 156). Most of the buildings were designed by prestigious architects, of Spanish and foreign origin, who were internationally renowned. Today, many of these buildings are great examples of contemporary architecture. For instance, the Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporáneo (CGAC) was designed in Santiago de Compostela by the Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona (MACBA) was created by the American architect Richard Meier in 1995, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was designed by the Canadian architect Frank O. Gehry in 1997, or the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid expanded by the French architect Jean Nouvel and completed in 2005.

A sense of change and progress in Spain was perceived not only in the country but also internationally throughout the eighties and nineties. The plurality firmly crossed the artistic production itself as well, in tune with what was already being done abroad. As the art critic and historian [Calvo Serraller \(2014\)](#) wrote: “The happy consummation of the country’s democratic transition process, which signified its definitive modernization and international homologation, made it possible for Spanish art in the last quarter of the twentieth century to be an art ‘beyond Spain’” (p. 336). Artists also began to create their works in a wide variety of media, ranging from the most classical ones, such as painting, drawing, and sculpture, to the most innovative ones, such as photography, video, installation, and performance. It became increasingly common to find at exhibitions works made in different media. As the historian [Bozal \(2013\)](#) said: “Diversity did not affect only languages or styles. It had to do with the exact condition of the artistic object and the artists’ work. Actions, sculptures, paintings...an artist can do all these things, he is no longer or is not only a painter or a sculptor, an engraver, or a draftsman: diversity, with results in each of the different activities, can be the mark of his personality” (p. 333). One of the characteristics of the Spanish artists active in the 1990s, and which became even more accentuated throughout the 2000s, was what [Fusi \(1999\)](#) described: “They all sought new styles and themes, languages and personal forms of expression, undoubtedly as the embodiment of their responses to their respective social or aesthetic circumstances, but without unity or homogeneity or generational or group, with no other frame of reference, therefore than the art itself” (p. 165).

This cultural environment also had an impact on the media ecosystem. Newspapers began to promote interest in cultural news in their daily culture section and monographs dedicated to a single discipline in the 1980s. The progressive political will and the pluralistic media environment of the time allowed cultural productions to be accessible to the masses and to stop being censored or conceived as elitist goods. During the following decade, the growing cultural effervescence in the different fields of Arts and Letters greatly affected all social spheres, from the most conservative to the most alternative. As a result, newspapers decided to gather this prolific creative production in an interdisciplinary weekly publication called a cultural supplement. *Babelia* and *ABC Cultural* were founded in 1991, and *El Cultural* in 1998 (distributed the first year with the newspaper *La Razón*, later with *El Mundo*, from

1999 to 2021; and currently independently in print and online as part of the digital native newspaper *El Español*).

This research aims to analyze the art and architecture contents of *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural*, covering a twenty-five-year period, specifically from 1993 to 2018. These supplements initially organized their contents into sections according to the various cultural disciplines, and this organization remains current. Visual arts and architecture contents are consolidated into an Art section, representing this article's research focus. Although texts on visual arts and architecture have sometimes been deemed superficial, it is important to highlight that they play an essential role in catalyzing and dissecting our historical, political, and social context.

*Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural* continue to be a benchmark for the Spanish cultural press today. No comparable competitor has emerged from native digital newspapers during the last three decades. At this point, it is necessary to highlight that the primary function of the texts of the culture section of the newspapers is 'to inform' usually of the most mediatic cultural events and productions. On the contrary, the supplements' mission is 'to reflect' on cultural events and productions from a theoretical point of view and consider deeply their context. Therefore, not only journalists write the pieces, but also many experts, mainly coming from Academia. More specifically, professionals who write about architecture in these publications are architects or specialists in the field. On the other hand, the visual arts texts come from experts in Art History, Theory of Art, or Aesthetics. This diverse ecosystem of professionals made these publications the ideal medium for establishing the practice of journalism specialized in culture in Spain. Additionally, the weekly periodicity of the cultural supplements allows professionals to detach themselves from daily news and gain greater depth by using jargon and a more sophisticated language full of references. In return, their readers are usually very demanding. Although they must not be specialists, they should be familiar with the cultural disciplines and context to understand the texts fully. For this reason, professionals must write rigorously and in an original manner to ensure they will captivate the reader.

The need for this study is urgent since art and architecture have been two of the most minor analyzed subjects in the Spanish context from the perspective of journalism. However, it is worth mentioning some critical publications connected with the theoretical framework of this research, such as *Suplementos culturales* [Cultural Supplements] (2013), written by Emy Armañanzas; *Periodismo cultural* [Cultural Journalism] (2019), coordinated by Margarita Garbisu and Ignacio Blanco; *Periodismo cultural* [Cultural Journalism] (2006) written by Francisco Rodríguez Pastoriza; *La crítica de arte. Historia, teoría y praxis* [Art criticism. History, Theory and Praxis] (2003) coordinated by Anna María Guasch; *La crítica discrepante* [Discrepant Criticism] written by Anna María Guasch; *Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196X–197X* (2010) by Beatriz Colomina; *Arquitectura y crítica* [Architecture and Criticism] (2013) by Josep Maria Montaner; and *Crítica & Crisis. El autor, el público, la arquitectura* [Criticism & Crisis. The author, the public, the architecture] (2019), coordinated by Eduardo Prieto and David Rivera.

The results of my investigation reveal a noticeable reduction in the length of the cultural supplements during the study period, which entails a significant decrease in art contents, with architecture severely affected. The conclusions of this study show the current precarious state of cultural supplements. The reduction in the number of pages these publications have suffered critically impacted the length of the art sections and, even more resoundingly, the space devoted to architecture.

It is essential to remember that the cultural supplements' print editions are fundamental for these publications since they determined the online versions until 2020. This means that the contents posted on their respective website came from the ones published on paper a few days before. In fact, until 2021, both *Babelia* and *ABC Cultural* have been very restrained in producing content exclusively for their digital editions. However, *El Cultural* has gained ground by covering daily events on its online edition and keeping active Twitter,

Facebook, and Instagram profiles. On the contrary, neither *Babelia* nor *ABC Cultural* is so involved on social media (for example, neither of them has an Instagram profile).

## 2. Results

The art and architecture texts analyzed in this article are in the Art section of *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural*. Additionally, the texts of *En Portada* were considered (the section that has eventually been part of the structure of *Babelia* and *ABC Cultural* to document the theme on the cover). The research used the year 2018 as a case study for the analysis of the journalism genres and the twenty-five-year period (1993 to 2018) to examine the evolution of cultural supplements. Moreover, to record changes in these publications, the analyzed period was divided into lustrums, beginning from the last year studied (2018) and resulting in the study of the following years: 2013, 2008, 2003, 1998, and 1993 (for the supplement *El Cultural*, first launched in November 1998, I started collecting data from 1999). All sample selection criteria and configurations are included in this article in Section 4.

Before explaining the data graphs that constitute the fundamental part of this research, the history and structure of the analyzed three supplements are briefly described below.

### 2.1. Origin of the Cultural Supplements and Organization of the Art Sections

#### 2.1.1. Babelia

*El País* was the first of the three analyzed newspapers that founded its cultural supplement on 19 October 1991. At that time, the newspaper director was Joaquín Estefanía Moreira, and the editor-in-chief of culture was Rosa Mora; however, the director of *Babelia* is not indicated in the masthead. An example of *Babelia*'s layout in 1993 is shown in Figure 1. Currently, the editor-in-chief of the supplement is Guillermo Altares (the director of the newspaper's culture section), and the current director of *El País* is Pepa Bueno Márquez. Furthermore, concerning the contents analyzed in this article, Bea Espejo has been, since the beginning of 2017, the editor-in-chief of the art section. An example of *Babelia*'s layout in 2018 is shown in Figure 2. The supplement is distributed weekly with the newspaper on Saturdays.



Figure 1. Example of a cover and some pages of the art section of *Babelia* published in 1993.



Figure 2. Example of a cover and some pages of the art section of *Babelia* published in 2018.

### 2.1.2. ABC Cultural

ABC founded its supplement on 8 November 1991. The first chief editor was Blanca Berasategui when Luis María Anson directed the newspaper and the supplement. An example of *ABC Cultural*'s layout in 1993 is shown in Figure 3. From 2021 onwards, the director of the supplement (and of the culture section of ABC) has been Jesús García Calero, and the director of the newspaper has been Julián Quirós. About the contents analyzed in this article, Javier Díaz-Guardiola has been, since the beginning of 2004, editor-in-chief of the art and architecture section. An example of *ABC Cultural*'s layout in 2018 is shown in Figure 4. The supplement is distributed weekly with the newspaper on Saturdays.



Figure 3. Example of a cover and some pages of the art section of *ABC Cultural* published in 1993.



Figure 4. Example of a cover and some pages of the art section of *ABC Cultural* published in 2018.

### 2.1.3. El Cultural

This supplement was first published with *El Mundo* on 3 October 1999. Yet, it was founded a year earlier by the conservative newspaper *La Razón* (on 8 November 1998). Nevertheless, its structure and design and most of its staff members remained unchanged. After leaving *ABC Cultural*, Blanca Berasategui and Luis María Anson took over the positions of director and president of *El Cultural*, respectively, both during the first months it was published with *La Razón* and throughout the period *El Mundo* published the supplement. An example of *El Cultural's* layout in 1999 is shown in Figure 5. In January 2022, Anson designated Manuel Hidalgo as director of *El Cultural* when the supplement began to be disseminated online by the digital newspaper *El Español* and distributed its print edition independently every week on Friday. Since the beginning of 2017, Luisa Espino has been the editor-in-chief of the art section. An example of *El Cultural's* layout in 2018 is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 5. Example of a cover and some pages of the art section of *El Cultural* published in 1999.

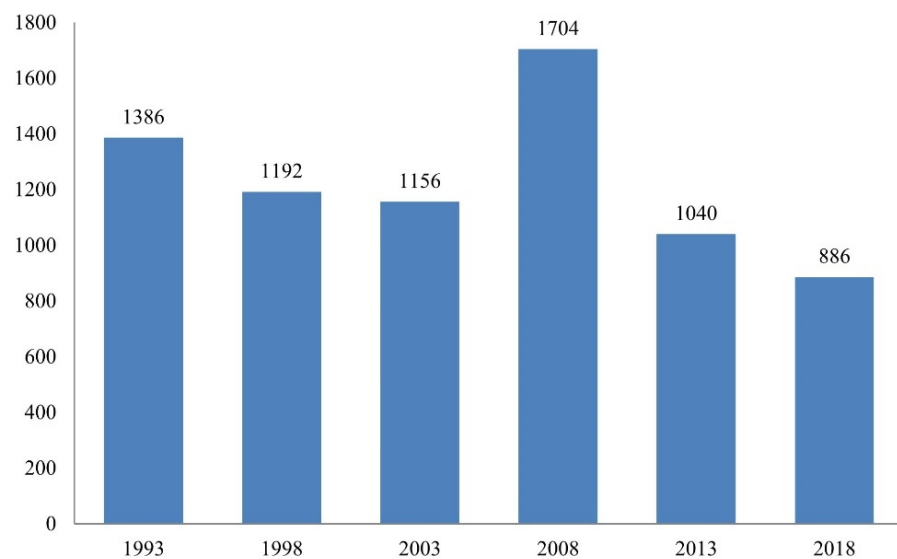


Figure 6. Example of a cover and some pages of the art section of *El Cultural* published in 2018.

## 2.2. Evolution of the Number of Pages of the Cultural Supplements

### 2.2.1. Babelia

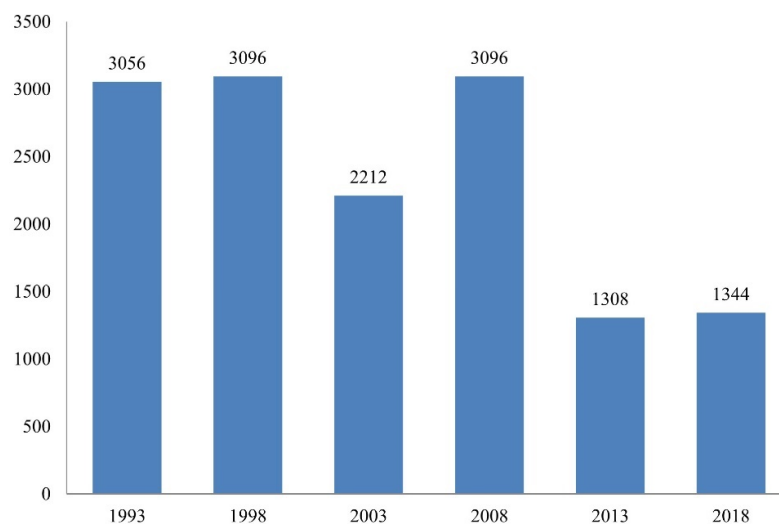
As shown in Figure 7, comparing the first data collected from 1993 with the latest from 2018, I verify that the number of pages has decreased considerably in *Babelia*. In 2018, the supplement had only 63.9% of its annual pages in 1993. The reduction of its extension was more gradual at the beginning and more dramatic in the last years, after the high number of pages published in 2008, when the supplement tried to recover its prominence. However, this heyday did not last long due to the Global Financial Crisis of 2008; in 2013, the number of annual pages plummeted dramatically to values lower than those of the previous five years: from 1704 pages in 2008, it dropped to 1040 in 2013. Further, it continued to fall in 2018 when the number of pages of the supplement reached the lowest annual number of all the years analyzed, only 886 pages.



**Figure 7.** Evolution of the annual number of pages of *Babelia* (*El País*).

### 2.2.2. ABC Cultural

The length of *ABC Cultural* has experienced two significant reductions. As shown in Figure 8, the first was registered between 1998 and 2003. In these five years, the total annual pages went from 3096 to 2212 (a reduction of 884 pages). In other words, in 2003, the annual extension of the supplement—at that time called *Blanco y Negro Cultural*—represented 71.4% of what it had in 1998. However, in 2008—when it was called *ABCD las Artes y las Letras*—the publication increased its number of pages to 3096. The second reduction in the annual number of pages was between 2008 and 2013 when it fell dramatically from 3096 pages to 1308. This means that in 2013, the supplement length was reduced to 42.2% relative to 2008, less than half. In 2018, the annual number of total pages recorded was almost the same, only 1344.

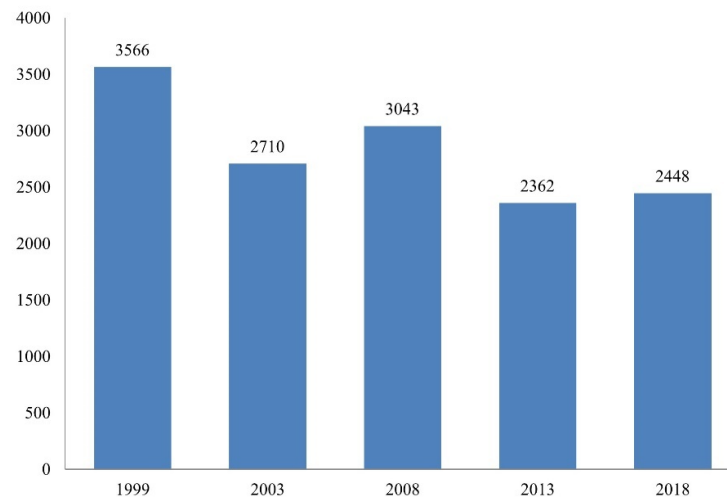


**Figure 8.** Evolution of the annual number of pages of *ABC Cultural* (ABC).

### 2.2.3. El Cultural

The annual number of pages of *El Cultural* has been reduced over the last two decades (Figure 9). In 1999, 3566 pages were published; in 2018, only 2448. In other words, the annual volume of pages in 2018 represents 68.6% of the pages published in 1999. This indicates a reduction of almost a third in the total length of the supplement. Throughout the period analyzed, the annual number of pages fluctuates, although not as suddenly as

in *Babelia* or *ABC Cultural*. The most significant decrease was the one experienced from 1999 to 2003, with a difference of 856 pages. In 2008, the annual number of pages of the supplement rose slightly compared to 2003: it went from 2710 to 3043 pages. However, it dropped again in 2013 to the lowest annual number of pages of the years analyzed: 2362. Further, it was similar in 2018: 2448 pages.

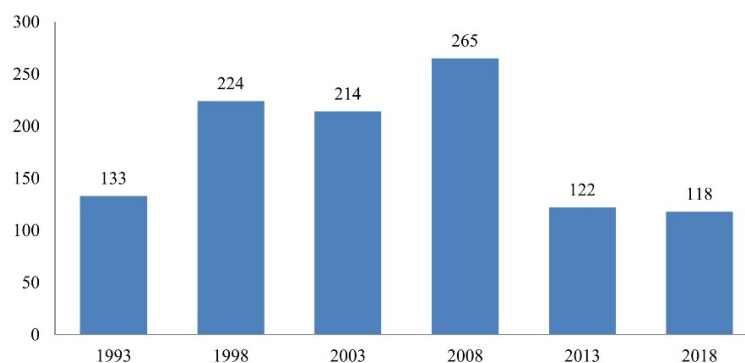


**Figure 9.** Evolution of the annual number of pages of *El Cultural (El Mundo)*.

### 2.3. Evolution of the Number of Pages of the Art Sections

#### 2.3.1. Babelia

As shown in Figure 10, the evolution of the annual number of pages of *Babelia*'s art section increased considerably throughout the first two decades. In 1993, only 133 pages were dedicated to art, while in 1998, 224 pages. In other words, in five years, the extension of the art section nearly doubled. Even though in 2003, the annual number of the art section fell slightly (only ten pages less than in 1998), it rose again in 2008, reaching the maximum value of all the years analyzed: 265 pages. On the contrary, in 2013, the art section was seriously affected due to the significant reduction experienced by the supplement. The art section had only 122 pages, even less than in 1993. However, it was in 2018 that it reached the minimum value of all the years analyzed: only 118 pages dedicated to art.

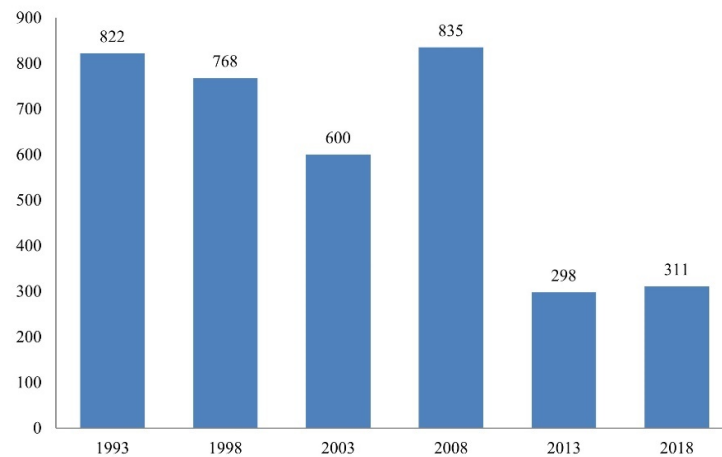


**Figure 10.** Evolution of the annual number of pages of *Babelia*'s art section.

#### 2.3.2. ABC Cultural

The length of the art section of *ABC Cultural* has changed in parallel with the supplement length. In its first lustrum, the number of pages gradually diminished. As shown in Figure 11: in 1998, the annual number of pages of the art section was 768, 54 fewer than in 1993, and 600 in 2003, 168 less than in 1998. On the contrary, the supplement experienced a significant increase from 2003 to 2008 that also had a substantial impact on the volume of

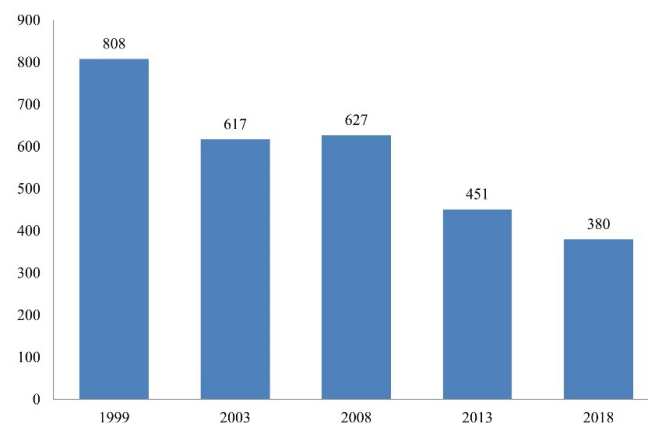
the art section: in 2008, the art section reached the maximum annual number of pages of the analyzed years: 835. However, in the following five years, the decline is abysmal. For example, in 2013, only 298 pages dedicated to art were included. That represented only 35.7% of the annual number published in 2008, a little more than a third. Further, it was almost the same in 2018 when 311 pages dedicated to art were printed.



**Figure 11.** Evolution of the annual number of pages of *ABC Cultural's* art section.

### 2.3.3. El Cultural

Figure 12 shows how *El Cultural* gradually reduced the extension of the art section from 1999 to 2018. It experienced its most significant decrease between 1999 and 2003, from 808 to 617 pages when the annual number of pages of the supplement highly reduced. On the other hand, in 2008, the increase registered in the full extension of the supplement barely impacted the artistic content: 627 pages dedicated to art were published. However, the art section suffered another significant drop in 2013: it went down to 451, reducing 176 pages. Further, in 2018, the annual number of pages of the art section reached its lowest digit: 380. In two decades, the reduction was alarming: the space dedicated to the art section in *El Cultural* was reduced to less than half.



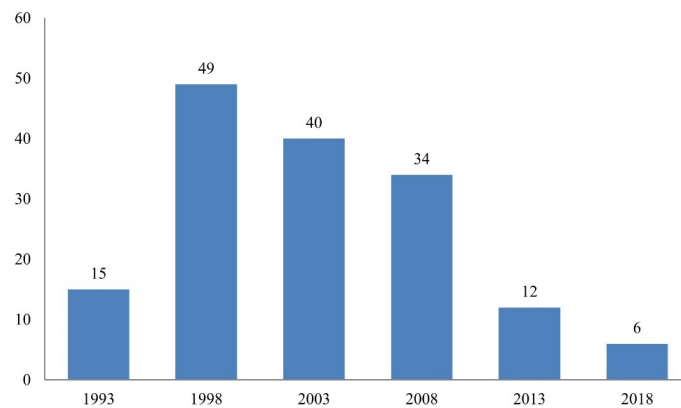
**Figure 12.** Evolution of the annual number of pages of *El Cultural's* art section.

## 2.4. Evolution of the Number of Pages of Architecture

### 2.4.1. Babelia

In 1993, the presence of architecture was insignificant in the supplement. There were solely 15 pages devoted to the subject throughout the year, as shown in Figure 13. However, in 1998, architecture was present in almost every supplement and reached the maximum number of annual pages dedicated to the discipline: 49. Unfortunately, the number of pages dramatically fell since then. The most significant decrease was from 2008 to 2013,

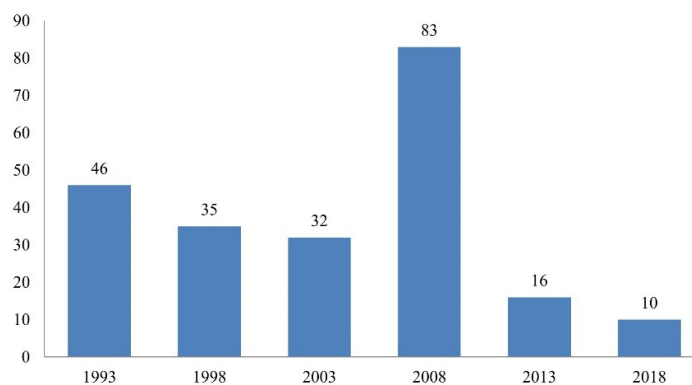
when the supplement went from 34 to 12 annual pages on architecture. Further, 2018 was even worse: only six pages dealt with the topic of architecture.



**Figure 13.** Evolution of the annual number of pages on architecture in *Babelia*.

#### 2.4.2. ABC Cultural

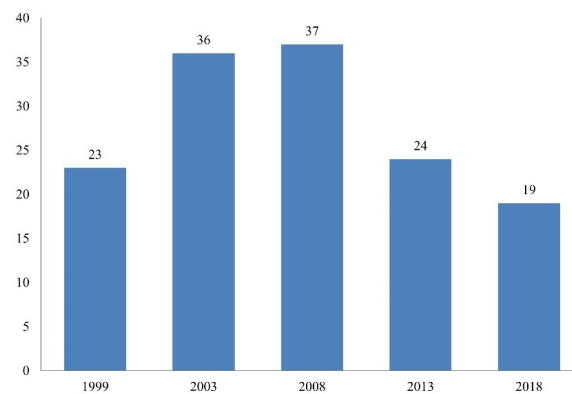
From 1993 to 1998, the annual number of architecture pages fell from 46 to 35, whereas from 1998 to 2003, it fell by three pages, from 35 to 32. In 2008, however, we saw a dramatic increase: the number of pages dedicated to architecture grew to 83, almost triple the number published in 2003. Unfortunately, however, this boom period did not last too long. In 2013, the extension of the supplement experienced a dramatic reduction compared to 2008, severely impacting the annual number of pages in the art section and, even more resoundingly, in the space devoted to architecture. As shown in Figure 14, the 83 pages of 2008 contrast enormously with the 16 of 2013, equivalent to only 19.3% of those published in 2008, less than a fifth. In 2018, it decreased even more. From 16 pages of architecture in 2013, it went down to 10 in 2018. At that time, it reached the worst result of the years analyzed and predicted an unfavorable future for disseminating this discipline in the supplement.



**Figure 14.** Evolution of the annual number of pages on architecture in *ABC Cultural*.

#### 2.4.3. El Cultural

In Figure 15, we observe practically no difference between the number of architecture pages published in 2003 and 2008, 36 and 37, respectively. On the contrary, a remarkable decrease in the annual number of architecture pages was recorded from 2008 to 2013, when the supplement went from 37 annual architecture pages to 24, which meant a reduction of 13 pages. Moreover, the space dedicated to this content decreased even more in 2018. This year, only 19 pages out of a total of 380 in the art section included the subject of architecture, reaching the worst result of all the analyzed years.

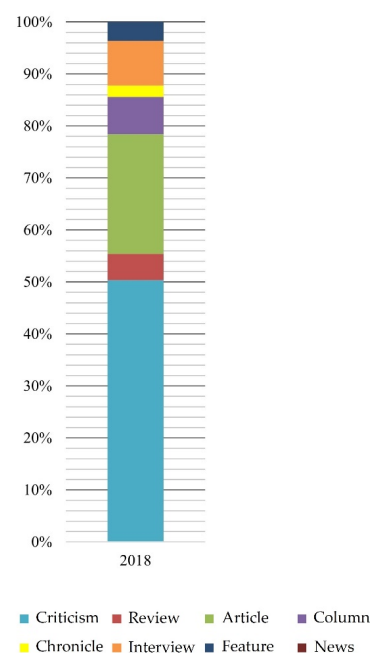


**Figure 15.** Evolution of the annual number of pages on architecture in *El Cultural*.

## 2.5. Journalism Genres in the Art Section of the Cultural Supplements in 2018 (Case of Study)

### 2.5.1. Babelia

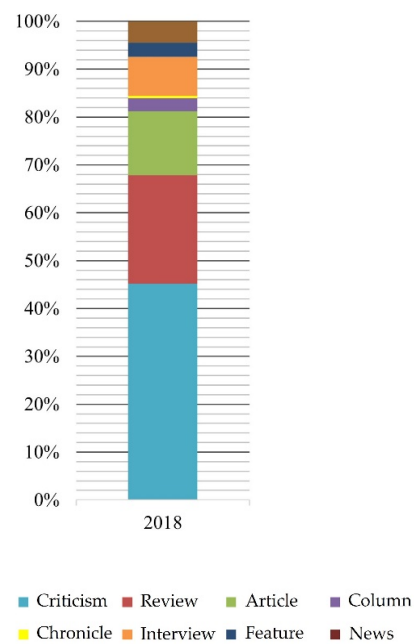
As shown in Figure 16, the genre that stands out most significantly in the art section of *Babelia* in 2018 has been criticism, representing the 50.4% of the texts. The second genre is the article, representing 23.0%. The interviews are in third place, with an 8.6% frequency, covering in-depth conversations with relevant people from the artistic and architectural world. Next, the column followed, representing 7.2% of all genres. Specifically, all the texts belonged to the “Azul de Ultramar” column, written by the historian Estrella de Diego. Finally, the review (5.0%), the feature (3.6%), and the chronicle (2.2%) were the least used genres.



**Figure 16.** Journalism genres in the art section of *Babelia* in 2018.

### 2.5.2. ABC Cultural

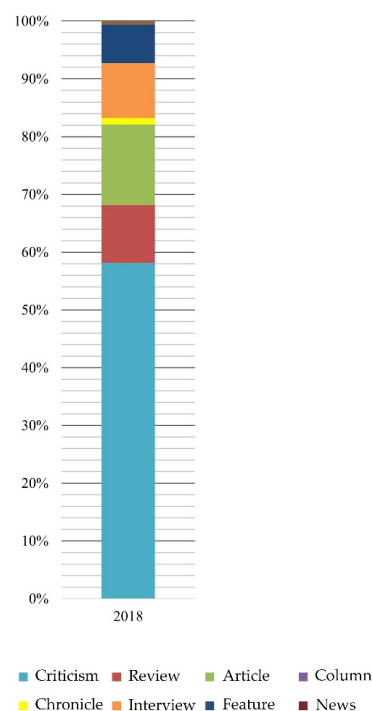
As shown in Figure 17, the most popular genre in the art section of *ABC Cultural* in 2018 was criticism, representing 45.2% of the texts. The second and the third most popular genres were the review, with 22.7%, and the article, with 13.3%. In the fourth position was the interview with 8.2%, and in fifth place, the news represented 4.4%. In the sixth position, the column accounted for 2.7% (Jesús Cano wrote all these texts in his “Punto Rojo” column). Finally, in seventh place is the feature, representing 3.0% of the texts; in the last position, the chronicle is barely perceptible with 0.5%.



**Figure 17.** Journalism genres in the art section of *ABC Cultural* in 2018.

### 2.5.3. El Cultural

As shown in Figure 18, the genre that stood out most significantly in the art section of *El Cultural* in 2018 was criticism, representing 58.1% of the texts. In other words, more than half of the texts published in the section were criticism, which is not surprising since the supplements are dedicated not only to informing but especially, to evaluating the works and generating reflection. The second highest percentage was the article, with 14.0%. In third place was the review, with 10.0%; in the fourth position, the interview was 9.5%. Features represented 6.7%. The last positions are the chronicle and the news, with very low percentages, 1.1% and 0.6%, respectively. No space was devoted to a column.



**Figure 18.** Journalism genres in the art section of *El Cultural* in 2018.

### 3. Discussion

Every culture is linked to different forms of expression. Therefore, claiming the relevant function of supplements today is vital to enrich our society's cultural background. We could call them "publications of resistance", a solid alternative to the growing media trend of writing brief and superficial texts. Particularly in the digital press, derived from how we consume information on the Internet. As the researcher [Armañanzas \(2013\)](#) said, in this situation: "Cultural supplements become even more necessary since they are small islands that serve humanist culture and aspire to its sense of permanence and continuity" (pp. 253–54).

Large-circulation newspapers should invest in a cultural supplement that complements the contents of their daily culture section. As previously mentioned, the most relevant characteristic of these publications is that they provide information and opinions on events and cultural products, exercising a crucial prescriptive task. Moreover, since they are weekly publications, the professionals have the opportunity of freeing themselves from the frenetic writing that the Digital Age demands and consult specialized sources. This condition has allowed cultural supplements to maintain their reputation as significant references in the world of culture within the written press, even though the great crisis they have suffered over the years. In his book *Liquid Life*, the philosopher [Bauman \(2017\)](#) said: "Culture aims higher than anything that happens to be 'reality' at that very moment. It is not concerned with what has been included in the agenda. Or what has been defined as the imperative of the moment. It aspires, at least, to transcend the limiting impact of 'actuality' thus defined and struggles to free itself from its demands" (p. 78).

Even though cultural supplements belong to the practice of specialized journalism, they are part of mass media publications. They are disseminated among a much broader and more heterogeneous public than Art and Architecture magazines. Notably, the ones analyzed in this article, *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural*, are distributed together with three newspapers with the largest circulation in the country. For this reason, the considerable decrease in the number of pages of supplements is a synonym for the lack of cultural ambition. In *Babelia*, the annual number of 886 pages of the supplement in 2018 represents 63.92% of what it had in 1993 (1386 pages). In *ABC Cultural*, the annual number of 1344 pages in 2018 represents 43.98% of what it had in 1993 (3056 pages), which is equivalent to the fact that its length has been reduced by more than half in the study period. In *El Cultural*, the annual number of 2448 pages in 2018 represents 68.65% of what it had in 1999 (3566 pages). On a separate note, it is essential to mention that other cultural disciplines in these supplements have been substantially affected, too, such as classical music, widely documented by the Spanish researcher [Martín Sánchez-Ballesteros \(2015\)](#). Since the primary purpose of these publications is not to inform—a task more typical of the culture section of the newspaper—but to value cultural events, stimulate reflection, and open a discussion, we need to take action. Action against clickbait and copy-paste content platforms. An effort to promote a cultural press shaped by texts that seek to scan the context and go beyond what is established, registering those other more radical, innovative, and revolutionary thoughts.

Traditional press is still interested in editing cultural supplements as a sign of high reputation. However, these publications have had more difficulties surviving over the years. We are living in a status of foretold crisis, in which the current situation is as the journalist Ruiz Mantilla and the researcher Garbisu Buesa described: "The sector continues to rely on supplements as an important instrument to reflect its activities, but the reader moves away from its sphere of influence, which causes a growing confusion in the newsrooms. The traditional written media do not renounce them as prestigious platforms but take them more as a tool for cultural agitation and reflection of creation than anything else" ([Ruiz Mantilla and Garbisu Buesa 2019](#), p. 29). Indeed, cultural supplements have a decisive role in effectively transmitting knowledge that will become part of the disciplines over the years.

### *The Relevant Role of Criticism*

Despite the voices that cyclically predict the end of criticism, it has traditionally been the most popular genre in the analyzed supplements. Its relevance remains until current times, as the results from 2018 prove. Criticism represents 58.1% of the texts published in the Art section of *El Cultural*, 50.4% in *Babelia*, and 45.2% in *ABC Cultural*. Gilbert, the character created by Wilde (2010) in his essay *The Critic as Artist*, said: “The future belongs to criticism. Only through criticism can humanity become aware of the point to which it has arrived” (p. 111). Further, he added: “It is criticism, once again, that by accumulation makes culture possible” (p. 112).

Thanks to criticism, we have an exciting compilation of recent history’s most relevant events and cultural products. Criticism contributes to generating the different strata that consolidate our culture. However, critics have gradually lost their influence on readers. They have become less and less of a presence in these publications due to the reduction in pages. Particularly in the art sections, the situation is as follows: the annual number of 118 pages of *Babelia*’s art section in 2018 represents 52.68% of what it had in 1998 (224 pages), which means that it has practically been reduced to half in this period. In the case of *ABC Cultural*, the annual number of 311 pages of the art section in 2018 is equivalent to 37.83% of what it had in 1993 (822 pages). In the case of *El Cultural*, the annual number of 380 pages for the art section in 2018 represents 47.03% of what it had in 1999 (808 pages). Therefore, the frequency with which professionals write has spaced out more over time. Moreover, their honorariums have been significantly reduced. This situation reverts the quality and plurality of the texts since professionals need better working conditions. As the Los Angeles-based critic and curator Zeiger (2021) described: “If newspapers, magazines, and online publications want to support a more diverse set of writers, they first need to take a hard look at how much they pay and recognize that low rates contribute to unsustainable and inequitable practices” (Para. 22). This phenomenon was further enhanced by the appearance of social media—especially after the great boom they have experienced over the last decade. Almost all institutions and agents from the art and architecture world, such as museums, galleries, curators, and critics (even those who write in these publications), have social media profiles. For this reason, the importance of supplements lies now more than ever in their ability to offer a deep and multifaceted look at the cultural context. It makes no sense for these publications to compete with the immediacy of the Internet. Their richness resides precisely at that slower pace that makes intellectual rigor possible through the unique look of each of its collaborators.

Asking ourselves what kind of Arts criticism would be desirable today implies entering the debate that generates the following question: What is the mission of art criticism itself? About this question, the well-known critic Arthur C. Danto said in the interview with the art historian Guasch (2012) that we can find in her book entitled *La crítica discrepante* [*Discrepant Criticism*]: “The main function of criticism is pedagogical: to teach viewers that art is important to them. That means that a critic must explain the meaning of the work and why its significance is presented the way it is” (p. 102).

The pedagogical task of the critic is always challenging. The architecture historian Rykwert (2014) wrote in the Italian magazine *Domus* that the critic must be, above all: “A fighter. To do so, critics must, of course, have a base from which to operate—not only the obvious one of a newspaper, periodical, radio or television program, or even a blog that will make their views public—but they must, more intimately, have a clearly articulated notion of what they think society must expect of its builders, meaning not only architects but also building speculators, developers, local and central government. All those who frame the programs by which the architect must operate” (para. 7). The Spanish critic, professor, and curator, Fernando Castro Flórez (Fernández Maestre, 2022) emphasized the intellectual responsibility of the critic: “The critic has to interpret, judge, give his opinion and discriminate rigorously, establishing argumentative guidelines. He has to say why he does it when he agrees or disagrees. The critic’s task is to disturb and open a discussion that reviews the context and tries to generate a culture that has a more extraordinary

relationship with our concerns and aspirations. In an opaque system, we must create a gap that takes us out of the catastrophe. Walter Benjamin defined the catastrophe, not as the last act of the tragedy like the Greek term says, but that things remain the same. We must avoid the immobility of criteria and the inertial repetition of things" (p. 226). For this reason, it is also essential that the media always know: "Who is the critic? And for whom do critics write? The answers to these questions define contemporary art or architecture and society itself" (Prieto 2019, p. 63).

Even though we have almost always found architecture texts in the press within the art section, the truth is that this discipline is notably different from the rest of the arts because its ultimate goal is to be useful. Goldberger (2012), architecture critic for *The New Yorker* from 1997 to 2011, in his book *Por qué importa la arquitectura* [Why Architecture Matters] defined the function of architecture as follows: "Architecture as art arises from the desire to do more than solve a functional problem. In a sense, this more profound desire is itself the ethical function of architecture, a declaration that the art of a building exists not just for the sake of art, it's not art for art's sake, but art for a social purpose" (p. 76).

Huxtable (1990), the famous architecture critic of the *New York Times* and winner of the first-ever Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 1970, went deeper into this argument, assuring that: "Architecture is like no other art. It is the most complex and compromised of the arts, subject to a battery of restraints, controls, and conflicts of interest, always striving to find the line where art and utility meet. A building is not a studio work; it is the product of an enormous mixed bag of programs and pressures that go far beyond the unified vision possible for the creator, performer, interpreter, or translator of other art forms. It is caught in an endless struggle between the aesthetic and the pragmatic on a battlefield of politics, money, and power" (p. 461). From Huxtable's statement, it is noted that architecture is an interdisciplinary practice in which subjects of different natures converge. Therefore, the treatment in the newspapers of this conjunction of knowledge implies a great responsibility. As Oliver Wainwright (*The Architect's Newspaper*, 2018), the architecture and design critic of *The Guardian*, said: "The role of an architecture critic is not simply to critique architecture, providing an opinion on the quality of the latest buildings, but to unpick and expose the planning policies, funding sources, and political agendas that shape the built environment and frame projects in their wider societal contexts. Architectural publishing faces several hurdles, not least in the dwindling number of advertisers paying ever less for space in magazines with shrinking circulation figures, wounded by the rise of free online content. Magazines rely increasingly on sponsored advertorials, lucrative awards programs, and other commercial partnerships to stay afloat. At the same time, many national newspapers have given up on covering the subject—of the eight national broadsheet papers in the UK, only three now have a regular architecture critic" (Para. 18 and 19).

Architects should fight for a decent space for architecture in the mass media and not be satisfied with its dissemination only in specialized magazines. Because if not, architectural journalism becomes a subject that only concerns professionals in the field or an elitist matter read by a few snobs. Further, people deserve to know about the spaces they inhabit since architecture always implies creating a social space. In 2010, the architecture and design critic Lange (2010) warned: "If critics don't assert their authority and attract an audience, if magazines and newspapers don't keep design and architecture in their culture sections, if new institutions aren't created online, architecture critique could disappear back into the academy" (Para. 4). Concerning Lange's argument, the results from my research demonstrate the noticeable reduction in the length of the cultural supplements during the study period has severely affected the architectural discipline: *Babelia* published 49 pages dedicated to architecture in 1998 and, in 2018, six only. *ABC Cultural* edited 46 pages in 1993 and 2018 ten. Further, *El Cultural* published 37 pages in 2008 and, a decade later, 19 only. Thus, my hypothesis is correct.

In the future, *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural* will face an immense challenge in carrying out—both in print and online—the task of promoting interest in the reflection upon artistic works and architectural projects. In addition, the supplements need to find

new strategies and subscribers for economic support. The Art section should take up more space, especially in *Babelia*, which is incredibly scarce. Above all, content about architecture must appear more frequently in these publications. Cultural supplements in print and online cannot stop being faithful to their intellectual commitment to society.

#### 4. Materials and Methods

To undertake this study, I used the content analysis method. I defined two samples according to size: the General Sample and the Detailed Sample.

The General Sample size was  $N1 = 843$  supplements ( $N1_{Babelia} = 311$ ,  $N1_{ABC Cultural} = 299$ ,  $N1_{El Cultural} = 233$ ), which have been analyzed based on the following variables: (i) total number of pages in the supplement per year, (ii) number of pages in the Art section per year, (iii) number of pages on architecture per year. The General Sample ( $N1$ ) is made up of all the issues published by the three supplements in the selected years, resulting in the scheme detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Number of supplements in the General Sample ( $N1$ ).

Supplement/Year	1993	1998	1999	2003	2008	2013	2018	Sample
<i>Babelia</i>	52	51	-	52	52	52	52	311
<i>ABC Cultural</i>	52	49	-	52	52	47	47	299
<i>El Cultural</i>	-	-	43	48	48	47	47	233
TOTAL								843

The Detailed Sample size was  $N2 = 146$  supplements ( $N2_{Babelia} = 52$ ,  $N2_{ABC Cultural} = 47$ ,  $N2_{El Cultural} = 47$ ), which have been analyzed considering the following variables: (i) journalism genre of text. The Detailed Sample ( $N2$ ) is made up of all the issues published by the three supplements in 2018, resulting in the scheme detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Number of supplements in the Detailed Sample ( $N2$ ).

Supplement in 2018	Sample
<i>Babelia</i>	52
<i>ABC Cultural</i>	47
<i>El Cultural</i>	47
TOTAL	146

For the study of the journalistic genres, I followed the criteria of the journalist [Grijelmo \(2014\)](#), who classifies the genres as follows (in order from a lower to a more significant presence of the author in the text):

- Information: the news item, the review, the objective interview, the informative feature, and the documentation.
- Information plus interpretation: the chronicle, the interview profile, the interpretive feature
- Opinion: the critic, the editorial, the article, and the essay.

The definitions of Grijelmo were not followed on only three occasions: in the review, the description formulated by journalist [Armañanzas \(2013\)](#) was used, as it is more precise for supplement texts. Likewise, Grijelmo's subdivision of interviews and features has not been made either—he specifies whether they are pure information or information plus interpretation—and both types have been classified simply as interviews or features. Finally, the column has also been highlighted and defined as a category (Grijelmo includes it within the opinion article).

## 5. Conclusions

The data analysis in the graphs yields the following four conclusions that explain the evolution of the presence of art and architecture contents in the *Art* section of *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural* from 1993 to 2018:

1. The extension of *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural* has been ostensibly reduced over the years: The number of total pages of the three supplements analyzed has decreased throughout the period studied (1993–2018). In all of them, the annual number of total pages in the first of the years analyzed (1993, in the case of *Babelia* and *ABC Cultural*, and 1999, in the case of *El Cultural*) is much higher than in the most recent year, 2018. In *Babelia*, the annual number of 886 pages of the supplement in 2018 represents 63.92% of what it had in 1993 (1386 pages), which means that its length has been reduced by more than a third since its beginnings. In *ABC Cultural*, the annual figure of 1344 pages in 2018 represents 43.98% of what it was in 1993 (3056 pages), equivalent to having been reduced by more than half in this period. In *El Cultural*, the annual figure of 2448 pages in 2018 represents 68.65% of what it was in 1999 (3566 pages), which means that its length has been reduced by almost a third in this time. On the other hand, it should be noted that, both in the 1990s and 2018, the longest supplement of the three has been *El Cultural* and, the shortest, *Babelia*.
2. The length of the art section of *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural* has been considerably reduced over the years: The number of pages in the art section has decreased in the three supplements throughout the studied period. The annual figure of 118 pages of *Babelia*'s art section in 2018 represents 88.72% of what it had in 1993 (133 pages); they are pretty similar. However, if we compare it with the second year analyzed (1998), we observe that the annual figure for 2018 represents 52.68% of the one it had in 1998 (224 pages), which means that it has practically halved in this period. In the case of *ABC Cultural*, the annual figure of 311 pages of the art section in 2018 is equivalent to 37.83% of what it had in 1993 (822 pages), which means that almost two-thirds have reduced its length since its beginnings. In the case of *El Cultural*, the annual figure of 380 pages of the art section in 2018 represents 47.03% of what it had in 1999 (808 pages), which is equivalent to having been reduced by more than half over this time. In addition, it should be noted that, in the 1990s, the highest annual number of pages in the art section was recorded in *ABC Cultural* in 1993, while, in 2018, it was in *El Cultural*. Both in the 1990s and the 21st century, the supplement with the shortest art section has been by far *Babelia*.
3. The number of architecture pages in *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural*, and *El Cultural* has been drastically reduced over the years: In all three supplements, there has been a significant reduction in the space devoted to architecture over the period studied. In all cases, the number of pages in the first year analyzed was higher than in the last. *Babelia* published 15 architecture pages in 1993 and, in 2018, six. *ABC Cultural* published 46 pages in 1993 and, in 2018, 10. Further, *El Cultural* published 23 pages in 1999 and, in 2018, 19. Figures that contrast even more with the best data of each of them in the years analyzed: the 49 pages of *Babelia* in 1998, the 83 of *ABC Cultural* in 2008, and the 37 of *El Cultural* also in 2008. Comparing the three supplements, the one that published the most pages on architecture in a year was *ABC Cultural* in 2008. If we focus exclusively on the 2018 data, the supplement that devoted the most pages to the discipline was *El Cultural*, and the one with the least *Babelia*.
4. Criticism has been the most popular journalism genre in the art sections of *Babelia*, *ABC Cultural* and *El Cultural* in 2018: The most popular journalistic genre in the art sections of the three cultural supplements has been criticism, around half of the texts in 2018, specifically: 50.4% in *Babelia*, 45.2% in *ABC Cultural*, and 58.1% in *El Cultural*. Second, the most used genre in both *Babelia* and *El Cultural* was the article, representing 23.0% and 14.0%, respectively. On the other hand, the second most used genre in *ABC Cultural* was the review or evaluative note, with 22.7%. However, the article in the latter supplement accounted for 13.3% of the texts in the art section,

occupying third place. In the other two supplements, the third most popular genre in 2018 was the interview in *Babelia* with 8.6% and the review in *El Cultural* with 10.0%. At this point, it is essential to mention that both the criticism and the article belong to the group of opinion genres, which, as can be seen, has been the most popular in the supplements, which is not surprising since they are typical of publications that perform prescriptive work and invite reflection. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that the column has had a significant prominence in *Babelia*, whereas in *El Cultural* none of these texts were published.

Through this research, it is possible to demonstrate the significant reduction in the number of pages these publications have suffered and its impact on the contents of the art section, affecting architecture texts in a particularly severe way. The loss of cultural ambition, especially in the latter discipline, must be remedied since architecture significantly influences people's way of life; for this reason, it is essential that it appears more frequently, and that its cultural and social value be reflected upon. It cannot be denied that cultural supplements have diminished their capacity to influence readers due to the multiplicity of content and the immediacy offered by the Internet. A phenomenon that was further boosted by the emergence of social networks. We live in a time when not only medias spread information, but also museums and different art institutions and agents of the art and architecture world, such as curators and critics, have their own profiles if we refer particularly to this field. Therefore, the importance of these publications lies now more than ever in their ability to offer a deep and multifaceted look at cultural current affairs. The richness of cultural supplements lies precisely in their slower pace.

In the future, cultural supplements face the great challenge of continuing to carry out not only in print but also in their online versions the task of selecting cultural productions, evaluating them, and promoting interest in reflection. For this reason, it is essential that these publications, and by extension, the professionals who write in them, are rigorous in the texts they produce so that society knows and demands cultural contents of interest and, specifically, better art and architecture. Variety should be present not only in the contents but also in the profile of those who write, to avoid homogeneity of opinions. In this regard, it is essential for the supplements to be more cross-generational to be at the cutting edge of the culture industry and ensure their survival in the upcoming decades. This approach to the new generations should be implemented: On the one hand, supporting young cultural talents; and, on the other hand, including texts by younger authors.

Since society is getting more use to paying only for the contents that we consume, it would be interesting that the print edition of *Babelia* and *ABC Cultural* could be purchased separately from the newspaper in specialized bookstores and at newsstands, like *El Cultural*. In addition, the supplements should consider renewing their layouts on paper, with a more radical and suggestive design. Grabbing the readers' attention to invite them not only to buy the issues but also to collect them. For instance, *El Cultural* is published as a magazine, a more attractive format than *Babelia* or *ABC Cultural*, which are printed in the same paper and size as their respective newspaper. In an increasingly digitized world, investment in print editions should be worthwhile.

Considering the significant transformations that supplements may undergo in the upcoming years, it would be witless not to think that they will come hand in hand with their digital versions. However, the famous aphorism "The medium is the message", enunciated by the communication theorist Marshall McLuhan in 1964 to point out that the medium influences how the message is perceived, invites us to ask ourselves if there is room in the digital ecosystem for reflection. Or will print editions continue to be necessary for the survival of this type of texts? What is certain is that cultural supplements should take advantage of the multiple resources and possibilities of the digital sphere so that their messages reach the generation of young people and adults that have already made this 'new' medium on their own.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** More research data can be founded in the Appendix II of El periodismo especializado en arte y arquitectura en los suplementos culturales españoles: Babelia, ABC Cultural y El Cultural (1993–2018) [Journalism Specialized in Visual Arts and Architecture in the Spanish Cultural Supplements: Babelia, ABC Cultural, and El Cultural (1993–2018)]. Available online: <https://eprints.ucm.es/id/eprint/71984/1/T43177.pdf> (accessed on 10 December 2022).

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

- Armañanzas, Emy. 2013. *Suplementos Culturales*. Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2017. *Vida Líquida*. Barcelona: Colección Austral.
- Bozal, Valeriano. 2013. *Historia de la pintura y escultura del siglo XX en España II. 1940–2010*. Madrid: Antonio Machado Libros.
- Calvo Serraller, Francisco. 2014. *El Arte Contemporáneo*. Barcelona: Taurus.
- Fernández Maestre, Marina. 2022. El periodismo especializado en arte y arquitectura en los suplementos culturales españoles: Babelia, ABC Cultural y El Cultural (1993–2018) [Journalism Specialized in Visual Arts and Architecture in the Spanish Cultural Supplements: Babelia, ABC Cultural, and El Cultural (1993–2018)]. Fernando Castro Flórez Interviewed by Marina Fernández Maestre 2022. Available online: <https://eprints.ucm.es/id/eprint/71984/1/T43177.pdf> (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- Fusi, Juan Pablo. 1999. *Un siglo de España: La cultura*. Madrid: Marcial Pons.
- Goldberger, Paul. 2012. *Por qué importa la arquitectura*. Madrid: Ivorypress.
- Grijelmo, Alex. 2014. *El estilo del periodista*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Guasch, Anna Maria. 2012. *La crítica discrepante*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Huxtable, Ada Louise. 1990. Architecture Criticism. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 134: 461–64. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/986900> (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- Lange, Alexandra. 2010. Whatever Happened to Architecture Critique? Design Observer. Available online: <https://desig-nobserver.com/feature/whatever-happened-to-architecture-critique/22808> (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- Martín Sánchez-Ballesteros, Esther. 2015. El tratamiento periodístico de la música clásica en los suplementos culturales españoles de referencia (desde 1991 hasta 2010) [The Journalistic Treatment of Classical Music in the Spanish Cultural Supplements (from 1991 to 2010)]. Available online: <https://www.educacion.gob.es/teseo/imprimirFicheroTesis.do?idFichero=auNLowNm5s0%3D> (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- Prieto, Eduardo. 2019. Crítica & Público. In *Crítica & Crisis. El autor, el público, la arquitectura*. Coordinated by Eduardo Prieto and David Rivera. Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas, pp. 14–63.
- Ramírez, Juan Antonio. 2010. *El sistema del arte en España*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Ruiz Mantilla, Jesús, and Margarita Garbisu Buesa. 2019. Cultura y periodismo escrito. In *Periodismo Cultural*. Edited by Margarita Garbisu Buesa and Ignacio Blanco Alfonso. Madrid: Ediciones CEF, pp. 17–42.
- Rykwert, Joseph. 2014. Does Architecture Criticism Matter? Domus. Available online: [https://www.domusweb.it/en/opinion/2014/05/21/does\\_architecturecriticismmatter.html](https://www.domusweb.it/en/opinion/2014/05/21/does_architecturecriticismmatter.html) (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- San Martín, Francisco Javier. 2018. Las artes plásticas desde 1945 hasta comienzo del nuevo siglo. In *Historia del arte 4. El mundo contemporáneo*. Coordinated by Juan Antonio Ramírez. Madrid: Alianza, pp. 343–426.
- The Architect's Newspaper. 2018. What Do Architecture Critics Think of the State of Architecture Criticism Today? Oliver Wainwright Interviewed by the Architect's Newspaper Editors. Available online: <https://www.archpaper.com/2018/05/critics-speak-state-architectural-criticism/> (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- Wilde, Oscar. 2010. *El crítico como artista [The Critic as Artist]*. Madrid: Reino de Cordelia.
- Zeiger, Mimi. 2021. It's Time to Abolish the Architecture Critic. Dezeen. Available online: <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/03/01/abolish-architecture-critics-newspaper-mimi-zeiger/#> (accessed on 25 September 2022).

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.