

Cover: Alfredo Genovese
Book design: María Sol Litvac
Photos: Fernando Calzada

©2008 Genovese, Alfredo Jorge
Grupo Ediciones Porteñas, 2011.
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Genovese, Alfredo
The book of filete porteño. - 1a ed.
Buenos Aires : Grupo Ediciones Porteñas, 2011.
120 p. ; 17x22 cm.

ISBN 978-987-22958-7-5

1. Fileteado. I. Título.
CDD 745.7

Listing day: 26/10/2011

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Previous page: Marcos Azulay, digital artwork.

Printed in Buenos Aires by Akian Gráfica Editora S.A. in december 2011.

Alfredo Genovese

*The book of
filete porteño*

EDICIONES  PORTEÑAS

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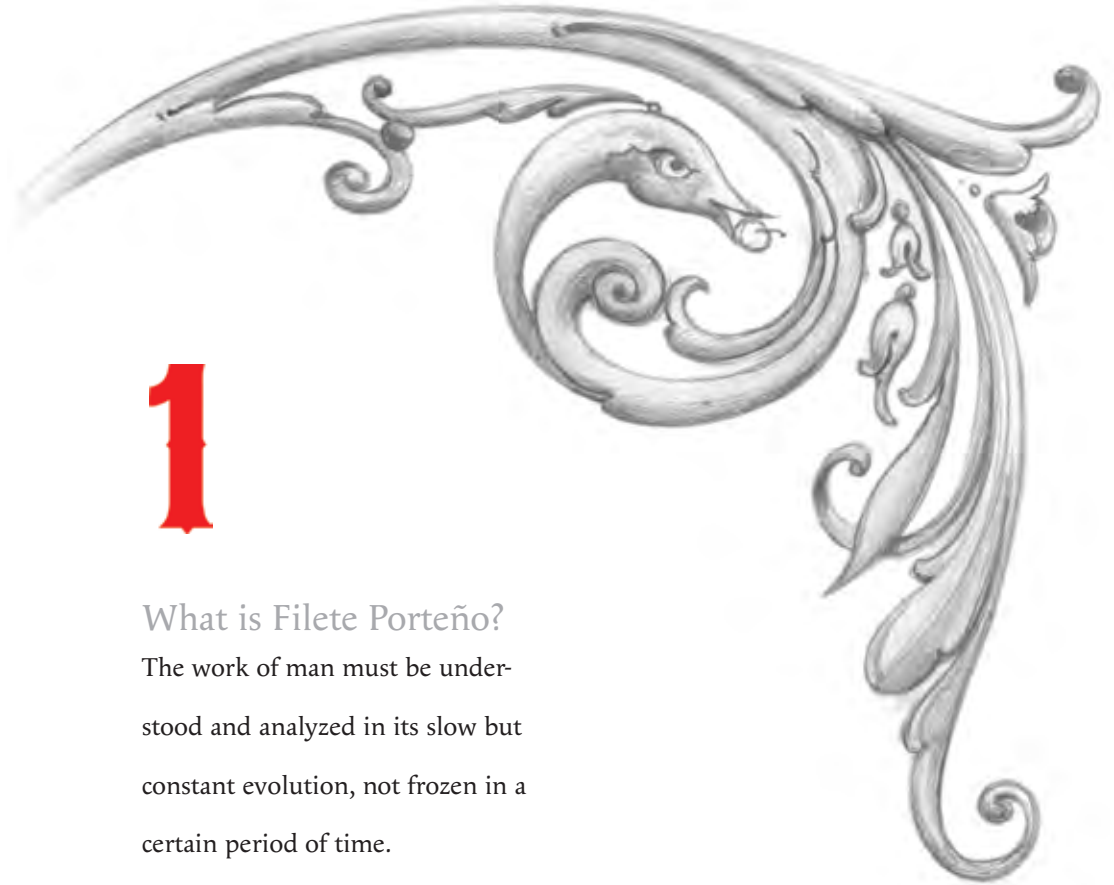


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1

What is Filete Porteño?

The work of man must be understood and analyzed in its slow but constant evolution, not frozen in a certain period of time.



A decorative border surrounds the central text. It features a ribbon in the top left, a five-petaled flower in the top right, a fish-like creature in the bottom left, and a large leaf in the bottom right. The border is composed of elegant, swirling lines.

2

Filete iconography

The ornamentation and shaping chosen by early fileteadores in their compositions are based on copies of decorative elements that they had access to in those times

2.1 Design

The first designs date back to *filete* ornaments painted in square panels on the sides of carts and lines or *filetes* that were made on their rails and rods.

Those basic early panels were of simple composition and were painted using flat colours, without light or shadow effects but as time went by, *fileteadores* refined and enriched their techniques, making the designs more complex.

A relevant compositional aspect that can be found on these panels is the location of the design, where a free space can be found in between the design and the board edge. Nowadays, this free space is observed in most of the art work and it is called “**talón**” (heel). When the heel is insufficient the motifs appears compressed between the

edges and when it is excessive, the motifs appears to be floating in the media space.

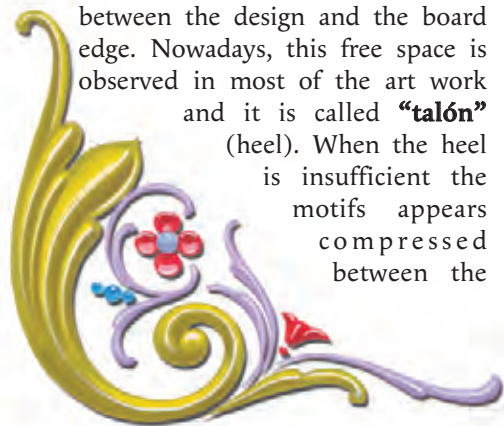
When the heel is equidistant from all edges, there is a little more space left on the bottom, the same width as the shadow cast by the motif.

This **balance** between drawing and the space left free is the first factor to consider in the composition. Moreover, the **equilibrium** is obtained by the symmetry of the grounds and the distribution of elements throughout composition space. Where the motifs are asymmetrical, the heaviest part is placed on the left and the right space belongs to the band. The **banda**, or band, is a straight line that is painted inside, parallel to the edges of the panel, of variable thickness and volume. It can be detached from the base of the acanthus leaf or may be on the top, occupying the space between the two leaves when the subject is symmetrical. The band, with acanthus leaf usually structures the whole composition.

Parallel to the band, towards the inside, the *firulete*, is painted. It is a thinner width line and has no volume. If there is enough space, it can also be painted out, i.e inside the heel.

The bottom part compositions tend to be more filled with motifs than the upper, which is usually completed with straight-bands for the whole rests on this heavier base. Several examples show how the scrolls of acanthus leaves were used to give more or less weight to the base.

There are also many **levels of composition**, taking into account the development from the edge toward inside. The **main level** or external is defined by external or ornamental forms which are thick and heavy and are located near the outer edge, acanthus leaves and the main-band are also painted the same color, to give unity to the whole panel and act as a harmonic framework combining straight lines and curves.



Typical elements of a filete

Talón:

The “Talon”, is the heel of the panel, meaning the space between the architrave moulding band and the sign edge.

Panel Border or Frame:

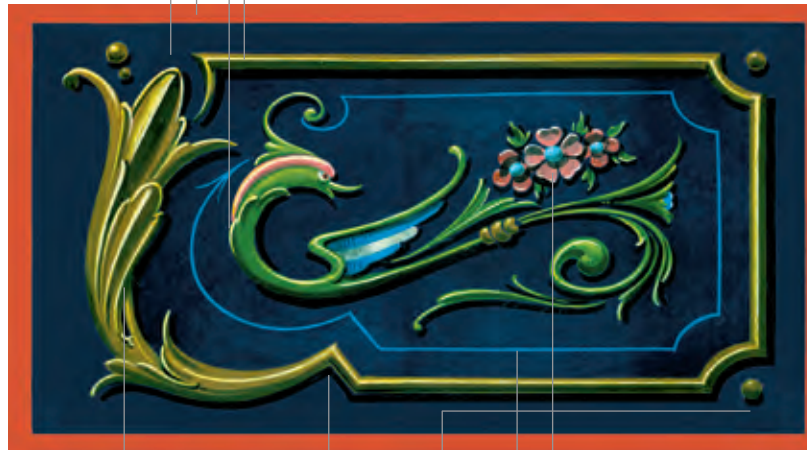
Enclosing all of the composition or working as a support around it.

Bird:

highly stylised animal pattern.

Banda:

or band, is the thickest volumed line, (often accompanied by the Acanthus Leaf) providing the basic compositional structure.



The Acanthus Leaf:

is one of the principal motifs used in Fileteado composition. In this case the Acanthus leaf has been joined to the moulding.

Cast shadow

Flowers:

here are “flats”, four and five leafed petals.

Firulete:

the “Firulete” is the finest, most delicate line used, both inside and outside of the architrave moulding.

Bolita:

the Spheres, Balls or Pellets are generally used to fill spaces within the design, to decorate letters or punctuate corners.

2.4 Motifs and figures



1 - Flowers:

There are three types, based on their shape: flat, tulips or little bells.

Flat flowers are drawn from a circular, which is divided into four, five or more equal parts, where the petals can be brushed either in a circled, heart-shaped, or lobed way. All petals are equal in size, some space is left among them which highlights the flower even more from the background and usually, they are painted with a concave shape with interior shadows.

Tulip flowers are built from a hemisphere, and they are painted

in that shape. They are more closed, as if looking at a cup from slightly above, and they can be more open or less open. The inner and outer faces are divided into different petals and are normally painted in different colours. These flowers have a central axis that many times guides or determines the direction of other elements in the composition.

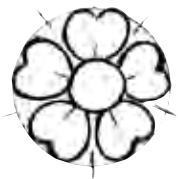
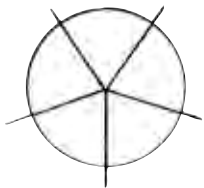
Little Bell flowers are more closely knit together than tulips and are built from a cone or a triangle. The outer side has a big fold or cut, through which the inner side –darker in colour– can be observed.

Another type of flower that was used in the past in fileteado is the poppy (*amapola*). It is a very common ornamental flower represented with the convexity of an inside-out tulip, and profusely used by Carlos Carboni. All of these types of flowers can be used in different combinations with each other.

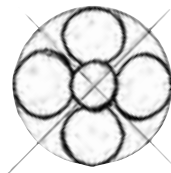
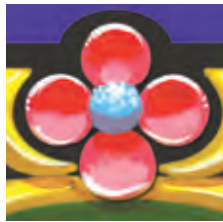


Description of the most popular motifs used in fileteado porteño

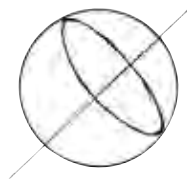
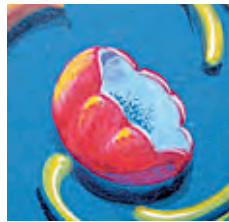
1. Flat flower 5 petals



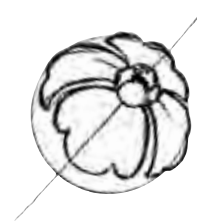
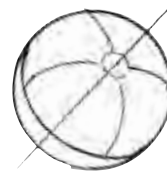
2. Flat flower 4 petals



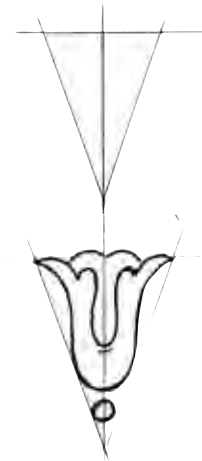
3. Tulip flower



4. Poppy



5. Little bell



3- Acanthus leaves:

They are ornamental designs which can be seen in the arts of diverse cultures from ancient times. In the case of *fileteado* art, plant motifs are taken primarily from architectural ornaments, and, usually, acanthus leaves form the structural part of a composition.

There are two main types: the leaf ending in a curl or the leaf integrated with the ribbon previously mentioned.

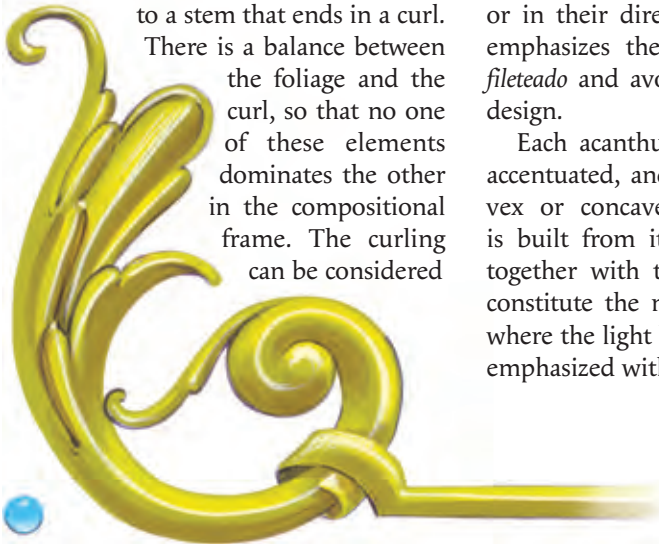
The first type has its foliage adjoined to a stem that ends in a curl.

There is a balance between the foliage and the curl, so that no one of these elements dominates the other in the compositional frame. The curling can be considered

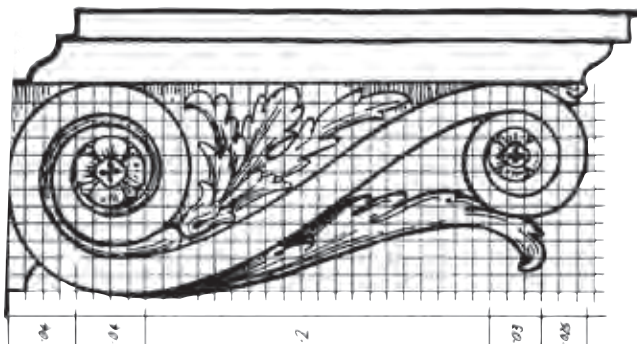
the centre from which the leaves that make up the foliage emerge, that are distributed all throughout the outer part of the composition. The second type has this very same foliage adjoined to a stem that goes on uninterruptedly along the band.

The acanthus leaves foliage is made up of smaller leaves -adjoined to a common stem- that must be set apart from each other, either in their shape or in their direction. This difference emphasizes the dynamic essence of *fileteado* and avoids monotony in the design.

Each acanthus leaf has its volume accentuated, and the leaf can be convex or concave. The leaf structure is built from its veins or axis, and, together with the sharp edges, they constitute the most outstanding part where the light hits the panel, and are emphasized with a bright tone.

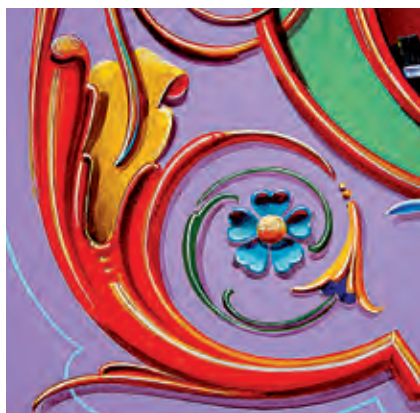


Top:
1. Acanthus leaf curl ending.
2. Acanthus leaf integrated with the band.



Left:
cantilever detail with acanthus leaf

Bottom:
samples of acanthus leaves

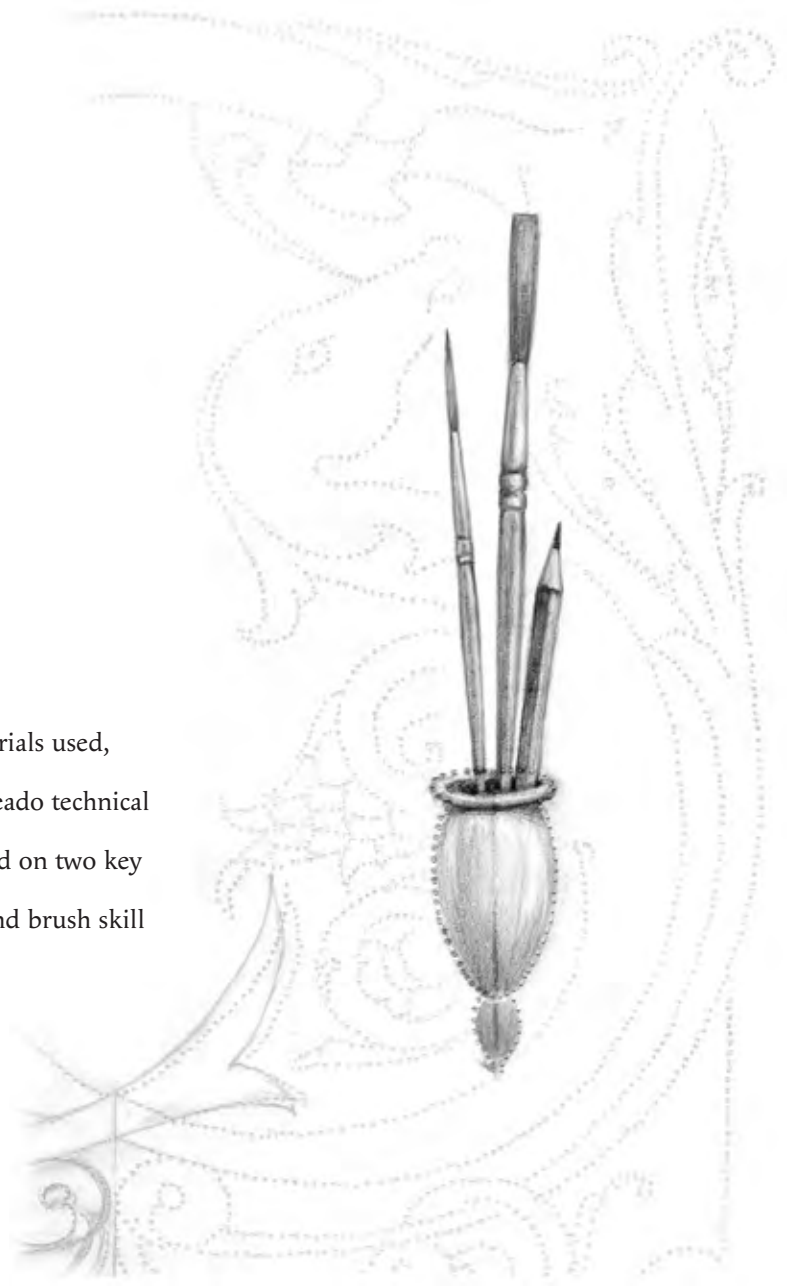




3

Technique

In despite of materials used,
I believe the fileteado technical
knowledge is based on two key
issues: drawing and brush skill



3.1 Brushes and materials

The *filet* brush can be recognized by the length of its bristles. The most common ones are made with hair from cow's ear. The metallic part that holds the bristles is called the ferrule, and it can be round if it is a *filet* brush, or flat if it is a lettering brush.

Another variety of *filet* brush is the “*banda*”, that is a handle-less ferrule loaded with five-centimetre-long bristles, which is used for longer strokes.

If the brushes are intended to last for a long time, they should be cleaned extensively with mineral spirits if synthetic enamel is used, or with soap and water in case of acrylic paint. It is also desirable to keep these smeared with vaseline or grease and keep them inside a tube, so that the bristles are kept in shape. If the bristles accidentally bend, they can be easily straightened with hot water.



Ferrules, wooden handles and cow ear bristles packing from a brush factory.



Ruler



Sponge to
tone down



Pounced bag



Palette knife



Brushes



Bandas



Stainless palette



Hole punch



String to mark lines



Using bandas or bands brushes

The bandas are special brushes used to draw longer lines.

Long filetes on spokes and cart wheels, lines dividing two colour layouts, borders of panels, designs called “llaves” -used for vehicle decoration-, were all created using the band brush. They were also used for bracket-shaped lines called “bigoteado”.

We will state the differences between the band brush and the *filete*

brush. The band brushes are held in the same way as the *filete* brushes but only in a more frontal manner, since they lack a handle, they are held in the hand cavity. It must be loaded with paint carefully over an metal palette, spatula or tile, making sure all the bristles face the same direction and are not entangled.

When painting, the band leans against the surface and then it is dragged slowly with a measured, uniform stroke, so that it does not vary

in straightness or thickness. The paint load should be controlled so that no drops are allowed, because they can ruin the line if they drop more rapidly when the stroke is being performed. As the band progresses it is discharged, causing a thinning of the line that is offset by increasing the pressure slowly. When the band runs out of paint, lift it, reload it and place it on the line just before where it was interrupted, to maintain the same width and concealing the junction.



Filling the band brush



Handling the band brush



Stroke

3.3 How to make a filete panel

Fileteado art was born as a craft, and, as such, it is carried out using several techniques which evolved and were improved over time, and which changed with the coming of new materials and supports.

Since its very beginning, *fileteadores* painted their creations with synthetic enamel and developed their techniques using this material with long-bristle brushes, all throughout the period when *filete* was performed on vehicles.

The paint was changing with the change of media and applications, incorporating acrylic paint, oil, make-up, fabric paint, and others as needed. In spite of materials used, I believe the *fileteado* technical knowledge is based on two key issues: drawing and brush skill. The technique developed here is similar to that performed on vehicles. It is also the oldest and maybe the most forgotten, in which synthetic enamel was on a rigid support and it will be explained in the following steps:



Drawing the Fonts

It is not difficult to acquire a certain calligraphic ability if some rules about the making of the alphabetic characters and the organization within them are observed. To paint a font it is necessary to define the **type of stroke, angle, proportion and spacing** that it will have, repeating this pattern in the rest and, in this way, drawing an alphabet with related characteristics.

A letter can be painted using uniform strokes (if its thickness is the same), or variable strokes (if letters have different thickness) as when they are painted with a quill. With the *filete* brush, these two options can be performed at will.

- 1- Letters upright: vertical and italic
- 2- Proportion, letter high and large
- 3- Letter spacing



Fileteado fonts

Different typography varieties used in *fileteado* ornaments usually have some features that are repeated no matter their type. We intend to explain some of these features observed in most of the letters designed for *fileteado*.

First, it is very common that some shapes are added in the letter outline, such as tops in the ends and curved edges used in old French letters —characteristic of brush strokes such as those named “fishtail”— and, in other cases, using broader and more imaginative criteria.

Letters with inner decoration can be seen too, either when they are partially filled with other colours, or when small pearls or other patterns are painted on them. Over the beveled edges where light hits, highlights are added to make the letter stand out even more from the background.

1. Letter face
2. Letter thickness
3. Repiqué
4. Cast shadow
5. Bevel letter edge
6. Face letter bevel

Letter face:

It is the shape of the letter itself, and it is painted first. If its measure is wider, you can decorate it more, adding other colours in the inside part, shadows and highlights to get a bas-relief or bevel effect, a coloured outline, pearls, diamonds, etc.

Letter raising:

The imitation of raised or blocked letters had its origin no doubt, in the use of thick or projecting letters made of wood and secured to the sign-board

instead of painted letters, and *fileteado* use to paint letters in this way. The edges or thickness of these letters are painted a different colour than that of the face of the letter.

Generally, perspective projection is made downwards and to a unique lateral vanishing point. The receding lines of the sides of a letter drawn at an angle of 45° with a set square, but it can also be made towards a centre, upwards or downwards when the text is curved or has a semicircular shape.

My own preference for these cases is to project the block to the left and downwards and then to place the pro-





216 PONTEVEDRA

Empresa Linea 216532

EN EL JARDIN DE LA VIDA LA MEJOR FLOR es LA MADRE



4

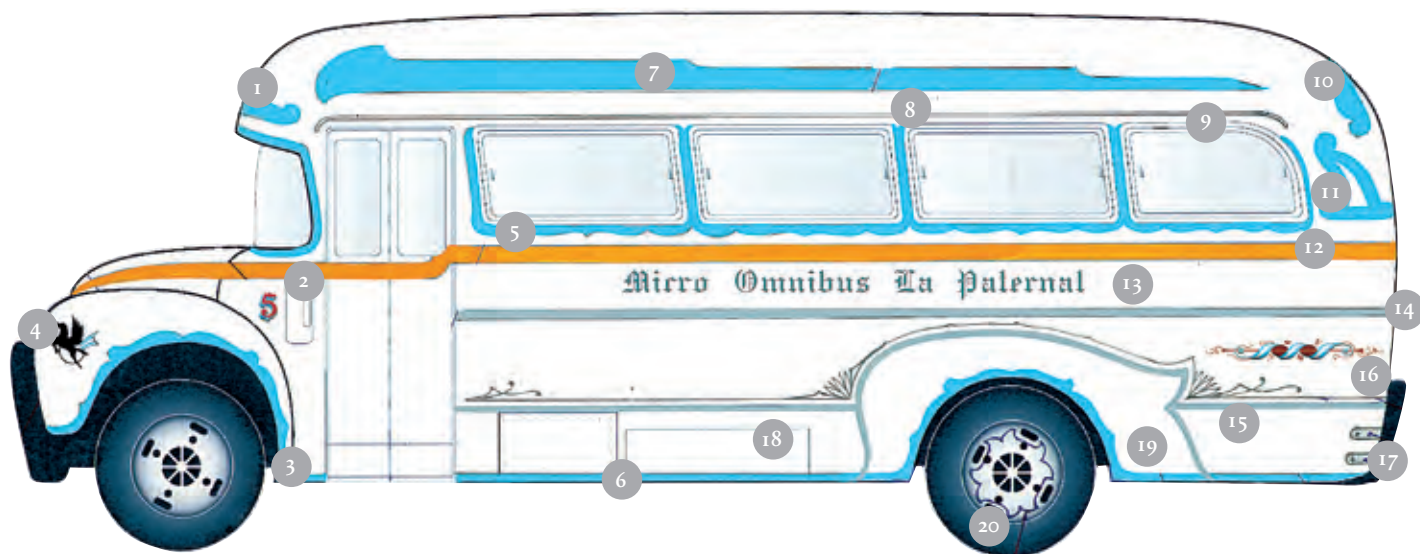


Filete on vehicles

Gradually, the filete on buses developed, including figures that we could classify into different groups: “Turfístico” (horseshoe, jockey cap and riding crop), “Timbero” (shaker, dice and cards) and “Pilchístico” (gloves, hat and cane).

4.3 Buses

Fileteado bus scheme by Alberto Pereira





References

- 1 Lomo cutting on the front roof
- 2 Internal number
- 3 Mudguard trim
- 4 Custom design
- 5 Windows trim
- 6 Talón de pollera (skirt heel)
- 7 Roof stripe or poncho
- 8 Space for route letters and line number
- 9 Rain drain or gotera
- 10 Lomo cutting on the back roof
- 11 Coco cutting on the back roof
- 12 Side molding
- 13 Space for company name
- 14 Panel stripe or bagueta
- 15 Skirt stripe or bagueta de pollera
- 16 Space for patterns on request
(see on right)
- 17 Bumper blades
- 18 Skirt or pollera
- 19 Wheel cover
- 20 Filete on wheels





Filete today

Working like a designer and
an artist, I managed to do
a lot of works in the advertising
field, graphic and clothing design,
bodypainting, and tattoo,
in a process that continues
even to this day.

5.1 Signs



Aguilera Guitars - (Brighton - 2008)
synthetic enamel on hardboard, 300 x 50 cm



Caminito Havanna (2009)
synthetic enamel on metal sheet, 240 x 100 cm

5.2 Advertising



Painted bottles on different brands, synthetic enamel on glass

Alejandro Dolina books covers

Top:
Villa del Sur, design for place mat

Button:
Club del vino, cover magazine



Top: Evian bottle artwork

Left: Aiwa sign, acrylic on canvas 130 x 100 cm

Bottom: CD covers designs and ACI world 2007 logo

