

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **ADMINISTRATION PAVILION AT THE SANT PAU ART NOUVEAU SITE**

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The Administration Pavilion is part of the Art Nouveau Site at the Sant Creu i Sant Pau Hospital, designed and built by the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner between 1902 and 1923. The Art Nouveau site is included on the City of Barcelona's Historical and Artistic Heritage List and its undisputable historical, architectural and urban value has also earned it recognition as one of Spain's Historical and Artistic Monuments and a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1997).

It was conceived as a spectacular entrance and meeting point, providing a reception area for patients. It was also designed to house the administrative facilities, the storage areas and the general archive, as well as a library for medical staff, together with the museum and lecture theatre for the entire site.

Over the years various alterations were made to the Pavilion and extensions were added in the form of annexes and mezzanines that changed the original appearance. These modifications, together with the gradual deterioration and aging of the materials, the action of atmospheric agents and contamination, had a major impact on the building's image. Indeed, in 2009, the external appearance reflected the ravages of an intense life of transformation and adaptation to the new technologies in the hospital sector.

The demolition and dismantling of the mezzanines revealed a series of open wounds and mutilations that led us to reflect on how best to address this intervention. The team responsible for drawing up the project opted to return the interior spaces to their original state, and to consider the traces left by time as elements with an innate aesthetic value, capable of enhancing the building. A two-fold strategy was adopted, consisting in some cases of a return to the original state, and in others, to reveal the history of the pavilion through its battle scars.

Five strategies were devised in order to conserve the Pavilion's vast heritage and historical worth whilst at the same time including a new programme that would provide the necessary services for the Art Nouveau Site such as a Conference Centre and a General Services and Administration area:

- The recovery of the building's urban and monumental image. A return to the original state by restoring the overriding symmetry of the building and its entrance square, focusing on the transparency of the porch and re-creating Domènech's original façades by replacing the lost or deteriorated ornamental elements.
- The reorganisation of the circulation and service elements, clarifying and rationalising movement around the building by replacing the original secondary staircases and service areas with new vertical communication hubs for people and installations. The recovery of the loggias and rooms on the south front as horizontal corridors connected to the new staircase hubs and the extension of the service areas into buried annexed rooms.
- The recovery of the principal interior spaces, assigning new uses to them. The 4 new communication hubs free the original rooms completely, preserving their spatial morphology in a return to the original state of decoration to varying degrees, depending on the state of conservation.

- Neutrality in terms of the use of new materials in order to prioritise the original over the new, shunning all desire to compete in a determined exercise of constraint and rigour, seeking only to reveal the essence of the new interventions.
- The application of sustainability and integration criteria to the facilities. Throughout the intervention, the focus was fixed on the dual premise of user comfort and efficiency, whilst maintaining maximum respect for the building's heritage, despite the difficulties involved in adapting the complex layout to its new uses, due to the wealth of decoration and detail throughout.

Practically all Art Nouveau architects resorted to the use of ceramic mosaics and ceramic tiles, although none managed to evolve and adapt both art forms in such a representative manner as Domènech i Montaner. His work is eye-catchingly unique, intended for use in all spaces and seeking functionality and beauty through the use of specific designs and colours. His work in the use of ceramic wall tiles and their applications evolved in such a manner that they can be seen not only inside the buildings he designed, but also on their façades and roofs.

In order to bring out the full decorative and sculptural beauty of the ceramic tiles in this Pavilion, we came up with four intervention criteria which are reflected in the accompanying photographs:

**Restoration:** the aim was to restore the original appearance, achieved by applying non-aggressive cleaning and repair techniques for the ceramic tiles and ornamental elements, as well as carrying out grouting and finishing tasks.

**Reintegration:** the reproduction of the original state of severely damaged or lost tiles or surfaces in those cases where the physical, graphic or photographic resources enabled us to replace, restore or reintegrate the original, on occasions simply by using techniques that create an illusion.

**Reinterpretation:** actions carried out to improve or recover lost pieces in those cases where insufficient information prevented us from recreating the original designs.

**Relocation:** Relocating the original ceramic tile that had been dismantled in strategic areas in the building. They are exhibited in a display format and laid using a reversible mortar technique, making them easily recoverable.