
In the Refuge, the Building and Outdoors. Four Cases of Recycling in Theatre Architecture

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English translation, Neil CHARLTON

Abstract

The article focuses on four cases in the area of Barcelona of arts buildings and facilities with a theatre auditorium, which in the last twenty years have recycled and restored former cultural centres and association and exhibition premises. It aims to provide a first comparative study of them through an analysis that considers the approach in each case to architectonic, urban, heritage, artistic, regulatory and participatory aspects. The analysis makes a first assessment of the degree of complexity that can be achieved through the confluence of the diverse issues, scales and disciplines: from the city to the building, from the building to the stage, from the stage to the rehearsal room and the workshop. Thus, an array of diverse answers is offered to the question of whether this complexity and multidisciplinary coherence can be programmed, planned and implemented or whether it is the result of a fortuitous and exceptional situation.

The research methodology is based on interviews with the agents involved (architects, coordinators, managers and creators), on the fieldwork in the buildings studied, on consulting architectonic projects, and on searching in archives and newspaper libraries the cultural projects and programmes of managing associations and groups. The approach of the research seeks to relate the fields surrounding the original architecture and the projects with the theatre activity and the aesthetic and artistic programme. Out of the relationship between these fields, which takes into account the performative function of architecture, diverse nuances, reinterpretations and limits emerge concerning the issues of obsolescence, restoration, preservation and heritage.

Keywords: theatre architecture, architectural recycling, heritage, restoration, obsolescence, Sala Beckett, L'Artesà, Lleialtat Santsenca, Teatre Lliure

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Introduction

The buildings analysed have common features: they are in the area of Barcelona, have been the premises of a historical association (cultural centre or cooperative), maintain synergies that can be identified with the contexts (street, neighbourhood and urban area) and had to go through a recycling transformation in a given period of their history. At the time of the intervention the cultural project of the association was redefined, the objectives and the task of the company or group that would manage the new facility were reassessed, and the architecture of the building was recycled and reformed. By doing so, the project strategies of the reform architects were put to the test. These synergies were set against each other and assimilate new paradigms and revisions of architectonic and theatre concepts and issues, such as the symbolism of the theatre building and its permeability with the environment; the representative function of architecture and its tangible development, with the building as a work-in-process; the performing arts in transition, from the illusion and fiction towards the “presentation” and the “scenic realization”; the “decoding” of the creation facilities and their architecture, particularly in cases of intervention in heritage.

In a lecture delivered in 1967, Michel Foucault included theatre (the theatre building) among the heterotopias because he considered it an “other space” and a “counter-site”. As a heterotopia, the theatre would therefore be a space capable “of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault, 1978: 6). Foucault characterises heterotopias by linking them to “slices of time” and, as they are “outside of time”, they would be inaccessible to the “ravages” of time. Thus, heterotopias build and include inside them spaces of illusion and enclosure, and shape a field withdrawn into itself. A place differentiated from and set against its context, in an impermeable relationship or one of codified and ritual access with respect to its environment. But how does this heterotopia vary when the theatre typology gives way to other types of buildings and spaces, which combine

the component of otherness and difference, now with overlapping with the real and the city? When theatres are no longer “just” theatres and become facilities with wider and more varied functions and activities (which combine creation and training along with performances, for example), how is this heterotopic character maintained, or graduated? How does the heterotopia change its function, following Foucault’s discourse, and evolve from denoting a space of illusion and enclosure to denoting a space of intensified “reality” or a space contextualised with the environment? And how, in this change of function, does the architecture of these spaces participate in the process, open them up and make them more permeable to their social and urban context?

Considering the possibility of the parallelism between the architecture work and the theatre work it is necessary to check if this variation of the theatre building as a heterotopia can be related to the change or shift experienced in recent decades by the performing arts. We are referring here to the “performative shift” that, from 1960 and 1970, renewed theatre with proposals that gradually revealed a set of lines of work that placed the theatre performance in the field of the “scenic realization” (Fischer-Lichte [2004], 2011). Theatre, in a postdramatic stage (Lehmann [1999], 2013), transformed and shook the stage and dramaturgy to give it a new way out, now as an expanded and ramified performing art (Sánchez, 2008), while rejecting the “signifying enclosure” (Sánchez, 2007: 282) of the “show” and the space that housed it. These transformations give rise to a question: does the “performative generation of materiality” (Fischer-Lichte [2004], 2011: 155) that characterises this new theatre, have a parallel in the architecture of the buildings that contain these performance spaces? And if so how do architects and other agents that participate in the definition of the new theatre space search and find new forms that allow and promote, if such is the case, the new functions of the building?

Two debates can help widen this issue of the formalisation of architecture for theatre use in relation to the socio-cultural, creative and aesthetic contents. The first deals with the cultural practices and the spaces and conditionings that house them. We are referring to the debate provided by Fabrice Lextrait, as coordinator of the team responsible for searching for, inventorying and analysing the new spaces of creation and culture in France between 2000 and 2002 in the report *Les nouveaux territoires de l’art* (Lextrait, 2004), Lextrait focuses on the *friche* (artistic workshops in industrial spaces in disuse) and on other “informal” spaces for creation, and lists some shortcomings of the traditional institutions and arts centres. He therefore acknowledges the need to promote creative liveliness and cultural innovation as well as the action of “deinstitutionalising, deconstructing, decoding” practices, spaces and organisational charts (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2008: 9). Adopting this approach, we propose using the four cases studied to see how far this deinstitutionalisation of the facilities, the deconstruction of the architectonic forms and theatre typology, and decoding of the organisational charts of the arts containers have been taken.

The second debate is more limited to the architectonic and theatre space, and was posed by Antoine Vitez (who in 1972 founded the Théâtre des

Quartiers d'Ivry and started the courses at the Ateliers d'Ivry) in 1978 in the article "L'abri ou l'édifice" (Vitez [1978], 2012). In this article Vitez advocates the very wide possibilities and potentialities that the theatre space and theatre building should contain and promote. In contrast, Vitez argues, by intervening in the reform of theatre buildings, architecture and architects often repress and standardise the needs, and fossilise and normalise the spaces: "Finally, there are only two types of theatre: the refuge and the building. In the refuge we can invent spaces of leisure while the building imposes from the outset a *mise-en-scène*" (Vitez [1978], 2012). Vitez's article compares the traditional theatre building ("the building") with another container, which he calls "refuge". The "refuge" would be that pre-existing building, with a different life and function prior to its theatre function, which, arranged, would provide a shelter — without so many constrictions in the forms — to develop wider, freer and more diverse activities. The question we will pose, following this difference proposed by Vitez, concerns the paths that the architecture project for the reform and recycling of spaces for theatre must follow. We will try to detect how architects solve the intervention of architectural recycling to maintain the freedom and availability characteristic of the "refuge" in theatre "buildings".

The Sala Beckett in Poblenuou

The Sala Beckett was opened in 1989 in the neighbourhood of Gràcia in Barcelona, and from 2007 it was involved in a judicial process that finally meant it had to find other premises. In 2009 Barcelona City Council assigned it the building of the former Cooperativa Pau i Justícia, in carrer Pere IV in Poblenuou, inoperative for several years. It is a street of old, eccentric layout that diverges from Cerdà's grid, in a neighbourhood, Poblenuou, that over the years of development of the 22@ district plans has gradually transformed: traces have been erased and factories have been demolished, which has left a landscape with episodes of desolation and with many empty sites waiting for new buildings. In this respect, the residents in carrer Pere IV stated that in 2017 "400 out of the 1,000 premises and sites of the area were empty or abandoned" (CON-FAVC, 2017).

The building of the former Cooperativa Pau i Justícia has two floors and was built in 1924. It housed a shop selling household goods, paint and other products and a grocer's, and on the first floor a café, the theatre and the cooperative school. The tender for architecture projects of 2011 for the reform of the cooperative building and its transformation into the new home of the Sala Beckett was won by the architects Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats. Because of the context of economic crisis and the lack of institutional financial support expected, the move of the Sala Beckett to the building in Poblenuou began by stages, and the tender's project was significantly modified, reducing the surface area and the functional programme. After a first phase of partial reform, in summer 2013 activity began in the building with the courses of the Obrador Internacional de Dramatúrgia. In November 2016 the new Sala Beckett was opened.



1. The Sala Beckett in Poblenou during reform work © Adrià Goula.

Flores' and Prats' architectonic project is based on the architectonic concerns also related to key issues in the field of theatre, the performance space and playwriting. For instance, we could link the premises of this reform project to Peter Brook's concern about whether people can exist without a background (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 115-117; trans. 2003), a central issue that is also very present both in Brook's shows and in the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris. Brook's reflection on the space for the theatre event questions why new theatres, designed from scratch, are not suitable for his purpose. Always critical of the modern, designed, neutral, conventional and standardised venues, Brook wonders what the context for the human body must be, which is always the centre of attention of the audience in any theatre space. And next he wonders whether in order to be the background of the human body an abstract, neutral space is appropriate or rather a living, "real" background, with found materials, and whether it is better to eliminate the artifice of the scenery both in the performance space and in architecture.

The architects Flores and Prats carefully listened to the ideas and indications of the theatre team, such as the director of the Sala Beckett, Toni Casares: "Usually, big arts facilities tend to give a solemn idea of culture, to make small cathedrals of creation. Please, let's avoid solemnity as much as possible."¹ It is necessary to consider the building itself, respect its sediment, and address it as a refuge capable of continuing to accommodate its ghosts.

The reduction in the budget and the size of the programme meant following an even more austere strategy sensitive to recycling and preservation. The tangible reality of the building in which they intervened had layers and layers of history. And the practice of the architects was already, in fact, favourable to working with the forms and materials found. Thus, the elements of the building were reused, and the architects addressed them with a spirit of *bricoleurs*. Throughout the process and the inactive times, the architects spent months looking at the building and inventorying its elements:

1. Excerpt from an interview (unpublished) by the author with Toni Casares, director of the Sala Beckett. 8 August 2016.



2. Foyer of the Sala Beckett in Poblenou © Adrià Goula.

furniture, woodwork, tiles, ornaments, staircases. In 2012 they documented them exhaustively in a *Projecte de deconstrucció* (Flores; Prats, 2012) but not to preserve them and maintain them intact or recover them and return them to an original, ideal or model state. With the project and the intervention the building was disrupted, many of the textures were exposed, surfaces were stripped and elements relocated. It is as if an explosion had shaken, moved, scattered and displaced them.

In the new Sala Beckett, the standardised and fixed elegance on which it is possible to recognise some of the conventions and elements of the auditorium with a proscenium stage, such as the velvet and the gold elements, the seats and the boxes, the ceremonial staircases and the mirror rooms, the arsenal of items of an architectonic typology that Georges Banu has explained and defined (Banu, 1989) appear in pieces, fragmented, decomposed, spread all over the building, displaced both in their position and meaning. Some of the fields emerge out of the reinterpretation and revision of forms borrowed from architectures of the past: the velvet bench in the corner in the foyer as an echo from the Cinema Skandia by Erik Gunnar Asplund; the proliferation of layers, openings and fragments of the passage-atrium, which recalls Jujol's Teatre Metropol; the remnants and voids in balconies and double spaces that go back to Carlo Scarpa's Casa Balboni; the textures and colours of the walls, inspired by those of the houses in Pompeii... With the old elements handled, the traces revised and emerging, the building's original geometries and fields intensify. Although it is true that, as Antoine Vitez wrote, the "buildings" impose from the outset a *mise-en-scène*, while in the refuges the "invention" of spaces is always easier and more feasible (Vitez [1978], 2012), here the pleats, twists, interstices and recesses, in an intermediate way, have managed to reinvent the forms and enrich a previous geometry through densification and anisotropy, in order to play down the orthogonality of the large original bays.

Both in the theatre and architectonic space, the preservation of the ghosts of the place acted as a spell faced with the risks that besiege the architectures of arts facilities: institutional coldness, the codified asepsis of what



3. The Sala Obrador in the Sala Beckett in Poblenou © Adrià Goula.

is new, the unreal or de-texturised effect of “real virtuality” of the so-called iconic projects. Against these three threads, the architects sought to capture the aura of the building, albeit not in an exercise in nostalgia. In the early months of the new stage, the Sala Beckett hosted some shows full of ghosts that played with memories and variations on the issue of memory, such as *La desaparició de Wendy*, by Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, shattered recollections that combine memory and fantasy; *El lugar donde rezan las putas... o que lo dicho sea*, by José Sanchis Sinisterra, where two Beckettian characters make contact with the underworld and a magic extra-stage where the past is recomposed; or collective projects such as *Fantasmes (Històries de Pau i Justícia)*, by the group Peripècies directed by Sergi Belbel, which documents and dramatises – in a show of disperse scenes, performed in the different spaces of the former cooperative building – the memory of the members of the association Pau i Justícia, its former inhabitants.

It is possible to consider a parallelism between some of the strategies of the project by the architects Flores and Prats – analysis and inventory, DIY and collage, displacement and transformation, decomposition and cohesion – and some dramaturgical strategies and tools of the founder of El Teatro Fronterizo and the Sala Beckett, José Sanchis Sinisterra. Without being a relationship of inspiration, imitation or reference, it is possible to find links and parallelisms between the architectonic strategies of the reform and the literary and dramaturgical resources of the playwright in El Teatro Fronterizo. For instance, in an early stage of his time with El Teatro Fronterizo, Sanchis Sinisterra understood the theatre institution as a “particular form of theatricality”, only one of the many possible, as pointed out in 1977 in the company’s *Plantejaments fundacionals* (Sanchis Sinisterra [1980], 2009). Sanchis Sinisterra sought to “revise and question, through practice, the

components of theatricality, investigate the manifestations in domains other than theatre, in traditions strange to the aesthetic discourse of the prevailing ideology, in bordering areas of art and culture” (Sanchis Sinisterra [1980], 2009). The playwright recovered excerpts of texts, and analysed, selected, worked on, transformed, capsized and recomposed the materials with which he worked. He made the elements of a text explode and, in order not to leave the audience lost, or exposed, he later provided them with cohesion. In relation to this approach, the architects Flores and Prats start every new project — and the new Sala Beckett in Poblenou is no exception — as an opportunity to check the pre-existing architectures, and the potential “architecturality” of the place of the intervention. This attitude opens the door to unexpected results, to unusual forms and spaces, distanced from what the typology and tradition prescribe. Moreover, Sanchis Sinisterra explored the theatricality of the literary texts by working on “narraturgies” (Sanchis Sinisterra, 2012), in plays (such as *Ñaque*) created based on flood materials. Flores and Prats try, in the reform of the cooperative in Poblenou, to bring together, displace and decompose and recompose previous forms, both of the building itself and other places and moments of the history of architecture. In this way, they experiment again with what is old, and open a fold by moving along the borders of arts and authorship.

L'Artesà in El Prat de Llobregat

The demolition of the L'Artesà theatre in El Prat de Llobregat in October 2017, after many years closed and under municipal ownership, was an event worsened by the fact that the Council itself promoted the demolition of the old theatre building to build a new theatre facility while using part of it. And because, according to many residents, everything was poorly done and based on a unilateral approach, against transparency and without citizen participation. Against this institutional decision, the campaign in favour of the reform, rearrangement and recovery of the building as a theatre facility was articulated, over recent years, through the platform “Aturem l'enderroc, Salvem L'Artesà”, which took over previous campaigns: the campaign “Salvem L'Artesà” from 1982 in the publication *Delta* or later campaigns by Els Amics del Prat.

The (planned) disappearance of L'Artesà theatre can be contextualised as another episode in recent local history, the culmination of an expansive, destructive and constructive practice that involves the elimination of heritage and the historical traces in the town and its surrounding areas, the decrease of agricultural land and natural areas, and the development of the Pla Delta. In El Prat de Llobregat, apart from L'Artesà, in recent decades many farmhouses have gradually disappeared (Ramos, 2014) and the list of the vanished or degraded heritage is long. It includes, among other less publicised cases, the slaughterhouse building, designed in 1918 by the architect of the L'Artesà: also an outstanding and interesting building, which had been owned by the Council for many years, in this case as a garage and depot of the municipal cleaning services. The slaughterhouse was demolished to



4. L'Artesà in El Prat de Llobregat in 1919. Fototípic Thomas. Joan Puigmalet collection.

build a solemn and overambitious building, the arts facility *Cèntric*, opened in 2010.

L'Artesà was the most valuable architectonic heritage in El Prat de Llobregat: located in the centre of the 1916 Eixample, it was a Catalan art nouveau building from 1919 by the architect Antoni Pascual i Carretero, which combined different volumes with differentiated roofs. The theatre was the main part, and had minor neighbouring pieces such as the foyer and the bar, which are partially preserved. The original L'Artesà building featured sober brick façades, and the auditorium was covered with enormous ceramic vaults that were a very outstanding example of the “*construcció tibada*” (Martorell, 1910: 119), a typically Catalan structural system, which has gradually extinguished due to the lack of protection and gradual disappearance of so many other historical buildings. Over the previous few years, the Council had carried out the informative (and propagandistic) campaign “L'Artesà de tots”, had leased the building and committed to invest to improve it (which it did not do), promising to unblock the situation of L'Artesà and announcing a participatory process (which was not done). In 2003 it bought the building, and before and after this date it commissioned a series of technical reports (De Solà Morales; Dilmé; Fabré, 2000) and, later, partially listed the building, opening the door to the later drastic and irreversible interventions.

With some conditions that accepted these rules of the game, in 2014 an architecture tender was called, with five finalist projects won by Forgas Arquitectes in partnership with Bosch/Sánchez/Nogués. The proposals show diverse variations on the issue of the solution promoted by the Council concerning the building, as the councillors pointed out in the media (*El Prat Ràdio*, 2015): remove the main part of the theatre because it did not fit with the type of facility El Prat de Llobregat needs. The tender, instead of respecting and adapting the whole set of volumes, sought a standardised architecture,



5. Auditorium and stage of L'Artesà, which no longer exist © La Riuada.

a larger facility undoubtedly better equipped (Ajuntament del Prat de Llobregat; BISSAP, 2016). The winning proposal was praised by the jury, which considered that it was the one that best suited the functional programme and – despite the disappearance of the volume and the auditorium of the original theatre – the memory of the original building. The project preserves part of the side façades of the auditorium and shows them through a glass gallery arranged on two floors.

From 14 December 2015, the date of the first assembly of the platform “Aturem l’enderroc, Salvem L’Artesà” and the drafting of a manifest, the neighbourhood platform was very active and took the protest to the media, the Council’s plenary sessions, debates and campaigns and the streets, with performative events such as protest parades and dramatisations of the burial of the historical building. The platform called for instance for “paralysing the project, because it involves the demolition of the 1919 building; carrying out reforms so that the state of deterioration does not worsen [...] and, finally, developing a participatory process that decides how this theatre must be in the future in the formal, technical and architectonic aspects and in the management of uses” (Esplugues TV, 2017).

The municipal plenary session of 14 December 2016, which dealt with the “Initial approval of the executive project of L’Artesà theatre” (Ajuntament del Prat de Llobregat, 2016), brought together many of the participants in the process and people against it. That plenary session included, as in the final act of a farce, the arguments of citizen participation, the desires and contradictions of the political representatives, and the frustration of the citizens represented. The session became a protest by many residents (called by “Aturem l’enderroc, Salvem l’Artesà”) against the plans of the Council through banners, shouting



6. Demolition of L'Artesà in El Prat de Llobregat © Aturem l'enderroc, Salvem L'Artesà.

and small acts of passive resistance. Finally, the dissident residents were evicted from the hall, and the plenary session for the approval of the demolition was held in camera. At different times during the plenary session, the Urban Planning Councillor argued that the new facility that would replace L'Artesà had to serve to “place El Prat de Llobregat in the first or second ranks in our country, not further down, in terms of the arts facilities of reference,” and stated that this was “our obsession”. Before closing the session, the Deputy Mayor proclaimed that the government team considered that the project was “very respectful of heritage (Ajuntament del Prat de Llobregat, 2016).

Teatre Lliure

La Lleiàtat emerged in 1892 as a consumer cooperative of essential products formed by a group of workers living in Gràcia, resulting from a split in a weavers cooperative in the neighbourhood (Biosca; Sanromà, 1992). The cooperative was established in a property in today's carrer Montseny, and years after its foundation, after buying the land of its premises, it undertook some work and opened the new building (in 1923) with a project by the architect A. Millás (Arxiu Municipal Contemporani de Barcelona: AMCB-12001_Q127_F0005651923_0005), followed in subsequent years by a series of reforms in the façade and the interior, which among others added an inner balcony as a gallery over the auditorium on the first floor, which was used as a theatre and dance hall. In the mid-1970s, in a well-known and studied episode, the cooperative found a valid path for its survival, recycling and relay. With the foundation in 1976 of the Teatre Lliure in its premises, the building



7. Work at the Teatre Lliure in Gràcia © Arxiu Teatre Lliure.

became a key centre for the provision of “cultural goods”, a new driver and spreader of culture.²

In the foundational Manifest from 1976 (Burguet et al., 1987: 274-280), the group of the Teatre Lliure sees independent theatre as the value of a “platform of elements” that had enabled certain solid theatre training and the acquisition of the craft by theatre people. The Teatre Lliure group rose to its historical circumstances and, if the audience was for them a central element, the importance of their role consequently had to have an explicit translation in different fields: from the new arrangement of the theatre and performance space to the formation of an association of spectators (which was founded in a later stage, in 1988). The audience was now part both of the life of theatre and the performance: it socially supports it and strengthens it, it enters it spatially, gets closer to the actors, and conceptually becomes a part of it at different levels.

The new theatre space, based on the reform of the old theatre and dance hall of the cooperative, was shaped to enable a new relationship between the audience and the performance. Working with their own hands, as some years earlier the worker members had done with the construction of the original cooperative, and with the aim of achieving this “free space”, the members of the new theatre cooperative arranged the space to enable the theatre they would create: they removed the fixed structure of the front stage but maintained a small stage or existing platform. In the Gràcia theatre, the large wood grid that longitudinally crossed the whole room would at the same time be the functional device and a symbol of this removal of borders in the performance, theatre and architectonic space.

2. Information from an interview by the author with Joaquim Gubern, in the office of the Gràcia association, at the Teatre Lliure in Gràcia, on 18 de July 2012.

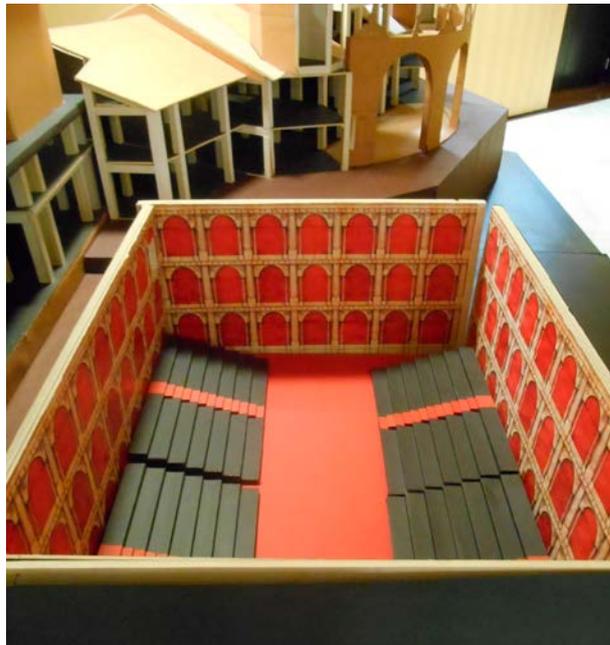


8. Roberto Zucco at the Palau de l'Agricultura, 1993 © Ros Ribas, Teatre Lliure.

The Teatre Lliure aimed to be a stable theatre, and in many aspects it took as a reference the *Piccolo Teatro* in Milan. The training and previous artistic experiences in the performance space of Fabià Puigserver, cornerstone of the group and ideologue of the theatre, are paramount to understanding this reform and also the later project of the second home of the Teatre Lliure at the Palau de l'Agricultura in Montjuïc. Puigserver's training in Poland in the 1950s was of particular importance, as was his contact with artistic proposals that also experimented with the renewal of the performance device and the role and special location of the audience. Poland was the context of pioneering initiatives in this field and appears and reappears intermittently in different periods of the 20th century, for instance in the work of Juliusz Osterwa's Theatre Reduta, in "the theatre architecture" of the architect Jerzy Gurawski, with Kantor's reflexions on the issue of the distance between the stalls and the stage, and in the work of Andrzej Pronaszko with the *Szyrkus*, with theatre proposals without a specific space for the stage, and with spaces that could be arranged with mobile and adjustable platforms.

The "fight against the proscenium stage" (Bueso, 1996: 51) was, as it has been explained on many occasions previously, one of Fabià Puigserver's first tasks, which would give way to later experiments, findings and proposals. Puigserver knew how to focus on and summarise experiences and innovations such as those by Luca Ronconi (the *Orlando Furioso*, from 1969) and Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil (*1789*, from 1970-1971, a reference for *La Setmana Tràgica*, 1975, at the L'Aliança del Poblenou) (Bueso, 1996: 59) to disrupt the traditional arrangement of the stalls and the stage. As Guillem-Jordi Graells explained,³ Puigserver had already been researching, remodeling and altering the theatre structure for a long time, surpassing the stage,

3. Information from an interview by the author with Guillem-Jordi Graells on 20 September 2012.



9. Model of the auditorium of the Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc © The author.

making the device of the traditional theatre with a proscenium stage more versatile and flexible. In the early seasons of the Teatre Lliure, it accommodated Elizabethan arrangements, boxing rings, multilevel structures, front stages... The versatility of the performance space of the Teatre Lliure could accommodate tradition through experimentation. In previous joint works and projects, the set designer had already put to the test the possibility of the multilevel in platforms on stage, in not strictly theatre spaces (*El retablo de Maese Pedro*, 1966, *Saló del Tinell*), had extended the stage into the stalls (*Tot amb patates*, 1969, *L'Aliança del Poblenou*) or had transformed the theatre's proscenium (intervention at the Teatre Capsa, 1970).

The Palau de l'Agricultura and the Ciutat del Teatre

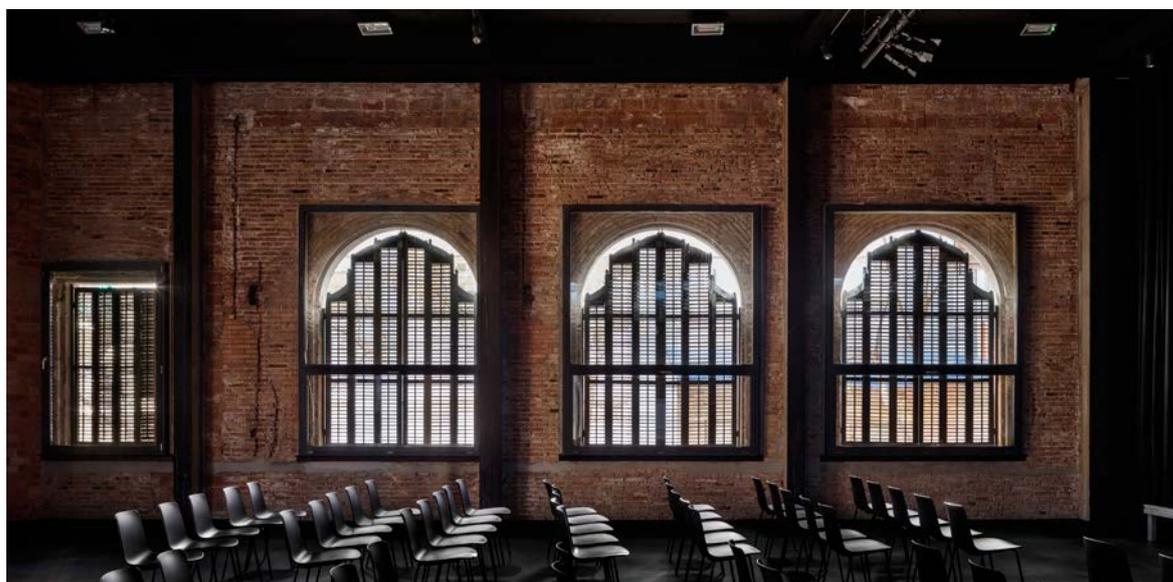
After searching in the late 1980s for new venues, the Palau de l'Agricultura in Montjuïc was reformed as the second home of the Teatre Lliure, in its second stage. Built as a venue for the 1929 International Exposition, in the 1960s the building was used as a flower market, in 1989 it was transferred to the Fundació Teatre Lliure, and in 1991 the preliminary reform project (by Fabià Puigserver and Manuel Núñez Yanowsky) was presented. Although Peter Brook had put on *La tragédie de Carmen* in 1983, exploring the performance possibilities in a “found” space of the neighbouring building, which would re-emerge as Espai Escènic Municipal under the name of Mercat de les Flors, in 1993 the Palau de l'Agricultura, not yet reformed, housed the performance of *Roberto Zucco*, by Bernard-Marie Koltès, directed by Lluís Pasqual and with a performance space by Frederic Amat. The architectonic intervention of the Teatre Lliure at the Palau de l'Agricultura emptied the building from 1929, a mixture of *noucentista* and eclectic styles, “postmodern *avant la lettre*” according to Núñez Yanowsky himself (Serra, 2001), to turn it into a “Frankenstein” building, as the architect defined it with sympathy (Serra, 2001). A building within another building, with original

skin that sheltered the auditorium made up of historicist references and equipped with new technology.

Opened in 2001, the Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc is a building that, due to its size, performance, needs and capacities meant a change of scale and model for the Teatre Lliure. The Palau was so big that it was about to become the symbolic “town council” of an entire city of the theatre, the Ciutat del Teatre, a complex conceived by the founder of the Teatre Lliure, Lluís Pasqual, as an “independent republic” (Pasqual, 1997: 13). A set of performance and education venues in the former exposition site from 1929, which focused on other thematic areas of the city (Pasqual, 1998: 13), and that sought to articulate and coordinate the programmes and activities of the Teatre Lliure, the Mercat de les Flors and the Institut del Teatre, with a new Edifici Fòrum as a logistics centre and neighbouring venues such as the Teatre Grec and Palau dels Esports. The Ciutat del Teatre did not materialise in the end due to lack of political support and criticisms by diverse sectors. As ambitious as it was controversial, in any case of the Ciutat del Teatre project would have represented for the Teatre Lliure a spectacular and grandiloquent chapter, as well as an unusual end on the long path run since the distant days when as a child Puigserver made “toy theatres” reusing shoeboxes (Roig, 1978).

Lleialtat Santsenca

The Lleialtat Santsenca was founded as a cooperative in 1894, and after being based in several venues in the neighbourhood of Sants, in 1928 the building of the head office at number 31 carrer Olzinelles (Dalmau; Miró, 2010: 201-216) was completed, with a project by the architect Josep Alemany, also responsible for the façade of El Molino at avinguda Paral·lel in Barcelona. A two-floor building, the Lleialtat Santsenca, like other cooperative associations and cultural centres, was divided into two main areas, with the grocer’s, storehouse and bakery on the ground floor, and the theatre auditorium and dance hall, the café, the library, meeting room and gymnasium on the first.



10. Auditorium of the Lleialtat Santsenca © Adrià Goula.

Stages

In a second stage, the building was used for production of nougat on the ground floor while the first floor was occupied by the Bahía dance hall, which became a place of entertainment and celebrations for the successive generations in the neighbourhood. The nougat factory closed in 1991, while the Rainbow disco, which had taken over the Sala Bahía, had been closed some years earlier, in 1988. After years of abandonment, in 2006 the Espai Alliberat per la Cultura occupied the space and turned it into a CSO (Centre Social Okupat) until it was turned out by the police in 2009. Later, the Lleialtat Santsenca building would be reclaimed by a series of associations in the neighbourhood, in a participatory process with the collaboration of the group of architects LaCol.

The historical and tangible study of the building gave way to a proposal of a functional programme (use plan, functional requisites and intervention criteria), the basis for an architecture tender called in 2012 by the Council, which had bought the building.

The participatory process

The architecture project of the new Lleialtat Santsenca is the result of a long, complex and transversal process, undertaken through the plurality of voices and actors that come together. After the eviction, and after some years closed and abandoned, around sixty associations in the neighbourhood called for its reform and use as a neighbourhood facility and they organised themselves around the platform La Lleialtat Santsenca. In this respect, the importance of the presence in the neighbourhood of the association tradition, its cooperative tradition and, even, the squatter movement and social movements is notable.

To specify the programme of uses and design criteria, the group of architects from Sants LaCol was in charge of invigorating, over two years of interviews, surveys and workshops, the participatory process with the associations and residents that had demanded the reopening of the Lleialtat Santsenca, and that would be its users (LaCol). Many of these users maintained a close relationship with the association and with the activities held in the building, such as the Sala Bahía. They were sure that, as the historian and blogger from Sants Agustí Giralt, current coordinator of the Lleialtat Santsenca, wrote “memory is fragile and needs its landscapes, although the experts don’t value them” (Giralt, 2018). The 2011 district plenary session agreed on the recovery of the building and the creation of a monitoring board, and in 2012 the architecture tender was called, with rules drafted by the group LaCol at the request of the Council, won the Harquitectes practice (work document from 2012, referenced in the bibliography).

Prior studies

Part of the studies and academic documents by a member of LaCol, Carles Baiges, who had found in the Lleialtat his final degree project (Baiges, 2014), would serve as a draft document for the later project. After analysing the needs of the associations that would work in the new Lleialtat Santsenca,



11. A space of the Lleialtat Santsenca © The author.

one of the decisions taken at the end of the process was that of not conceiving spaces exclusively for the use of each group.⁴ This was agreed so as to evolve with respect to traditional models of facilities and to find new models different from association centres, social centres or incubators, as the aim was to propose “a new typology of facility that should be a reference for the city, both in terms of its programme, management and use of the venue” (LaCol). Thus, in order to conceive the use and management of the centre, facilities such as the Ateneu l’Harmonia and the Casa Orlandai were taken as references, as were some aspects of the management of the Centre Cívic Cotxeres de Sants.⁵ In contrast to the most usual social and public facilities, an arrangement based on three types of basic spaces was envisaged: a set of communal and shared spaces and services (management, meeting and assembly, bar, kitchen, shop...), other spaces with a flexible organisation, which depending on the time would be used by one group or another, and other spaces more defined for specific uses.

The tender’s proposal

The “strategy of occupation” proposed by Harquitectes, which they summarised in the tender as “Deixar sortir abans d’entrar”, is based on the cleaning and rearrangement of a long hall in order to open and put it at the service of the spaces of activity. Harquitectes’ proposal, which was called “L’hora del pati” (Harquitectes, 2012), has as a central element the opening of an atrium, courtyard or covered inner street, with bioclimatic air conditioning and heating. The reference to the Teatro Oficina, the project by the architect

4. Information from an interview by the author with the architect Xavier Ros, from Harquitectes, on 18 December 2015.

5. Information from an interview by the author with the coordinator of the Lleialtat Santsenca, Agustí Giral, on 29 March 2018.



12. Performance in the atrium of the Lleialtat Santsenca © The author.

Lina Bo Bardi (and Edson Elito) in São Paulo from 1984 based on scaffolding in a high, long and narrow bay, is clear. A pragmatic and functional project, whose foundation is a unique resounding gesture.

Continuing with the tender's project, in the room on the first floor, where in the past there was the dance hall, Harquitectes' proposal involved placing a series of curtains for different uses, apart from surrounding mobile elements to adapt it acoustically, thermally and for fire protection, and that would avoid the use of not very flexible coating systems. The performance activity, or of any other kind, does not limit itself to this field, because any activity (workshop, debate, presentation, performance...) can take place in different parts of the building: in the atrium, in the distribution of the multipurpose spaces on floors 0 and 1, in the room-workshop at the rear block (with wooden flooring for the rehearsals), in another balcony-platform field at two levels, in the rear section... (Harquitectes, 2012).

A later version of the intervention pursued several objectives. They were strategic objectives based on reversing the idea of obsolescence (reuse is prioritised), on expanding the notion of restoration (without orthodoxy: what is useless is to be demolished) and making the scope of recycling (of the structure of the building, the tangible reality, the typology of facility) extensible.

These objectives sought, in the first place, the reuse and selective demolition of parts of the existing building, resulting in the old and new sections of walls coexisting alongside the current building, in a patchwork of stages, materials, colours and textures. The façade was fixed, preserved without being polished, and bears the patina that time has gradually left on it. The sustainability and contextualisation that seek out (visual, volumetric) relationships with the environment were some of the remaining objectives of the project.

As happens with the area of the atrium, which works to rearrange, serve and provide air conditioning and heating to the surrounding spaces, the roof (with metal beams and a substructure of polycarbonate and transparent polycarbonate sheets) is a fundamental part of the project because it arranges everything and gives meaning to the whole by operating the air conditioning and heating system that will make each part habitable depending on use. The roof covers the volume of the original building: it acts as an umbrella-shelter and makes it habitable through technology. It therefore completes the atrium (the new empty space, like a wedge that sets out and arranges the whole) and the perimeter walls that fix its layers, textures, stages of the past in a list of elements, fields and devices that embrace and encompass the pre-existing building while establishing themselves and growing inside it. The new facility is a generator of activities, an open and expectant space, and urban enclave and a spring of memory, thereby including, almost simultaneously, both symbolically and materially, the future and past bound to the present.

Model, Architecture, City

As theatre buildings, as types of arts facilities with a performance activity, the four cases addressed firstly exemplify different degrees of the “heterotopic” condition, according to Michel Foucault’s definition of “heterotopia” (Foucault [1967], 1984). This variability of theatre as heterotopia is found in the four cases in the differences in the expansion of the type of activity carried out there. The dispersion of the activity in the buildings is now done in different types of spaces and venues, and not only in the auditorium and on the stage. And the physical permeability of the building-container, through more mediating spaces and more accessible perimeters, of permeable foyers with the new heterogeneous functions and open uses, promotes and accompanies a conceptual and functional permeability. Both the architectures and the types of performances and events taking place there and the organisation of the facilities and their relationship with the environments maintain and follow new different, more flexible and open dynamics (in the cases of the Lleialtat Santsenca and the Sala Beckett in Poblenou) and more in keeping with those of the theatre building and the model of traditional or conventional facility (in the cases of the Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc and the new L’Artesà in El Prat de Llobregat). The first two cases maintain intact the potentialities of the “refuge” according to Antoine Vitez’s definition while the second two form part of the typology of the theatre “building” despite the demolition and “reconstruction” of the original theatre, in the case of L’Artesà.

If we look at the architectonic approach to the theatre auditoria in each of the buildings studied, we find different approaches, strategies, goals and results, ranging from the space emerged *ex novo* to the recycling of prior spaces. In the first section we place the auditorium of the second Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc and that of the new L'Artesà, which, although they are new venues in buildings that exploit old structures with new architectures, it is worth saying that they also invoke the appearance of the forms of the past: the Teatre Farnese, in Parma, in the Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc, and the original auditorium of L'Artesà, in El Prat de Llobregat. These auditoria are located in buildings that have emerged from two models: in the case of the Teatre Lliure from a scale model, made by Fabià Puigserver himself, imagining a space that can be many spaces. In the case of El Prat de Llobregat, the new theatre and its auditorium have emerged out of the model adopted by the functional plan of the tender following the guidelines of the regulations and indicators of the PECCat or the SPEEM, the documents that prescribe standardised performance facilities, with variations according to the demographic statistics and characteristics and the regulations or guidelines that establish the “needs” of each town.

In the cases of the Sala Beckett and the Lleialtat Santsenca, the architectonic intervention in the building would fit within the heterodox classification of the so-called “grafting architecture” (Torrents et al., 2014: 13). In these two cases, with reference to the strict theatre space of the building, the projects are based not only on maintaining the auditorium but on unfolding and expanding it in satellite spaces that blur the attributes of the front stage. The Sala Beckett resolves the question by denying the dilemma between the old and the new. It maintains the original auditorium on the first floor (the Sala Obrador, which preserves the proscenium and the backdrop with the irregular and accumulated patinas of old paints and textures), builds another one (the Sala Beckett, the main auditorium on the ground floor, which is the black box) and still offers a third space of less defined use (the former café on the first floor, a room for rehearsals and events). The Lleialtat Santsenca preserves the former dance hall (of the Sala Bahía), which it equips with a simple system of moveable curtains, platform and chairs, and offers another big auditorium on the ground floor (for assemblies, lectures...), and yet another space in the atrium-theatre scaffolding (for performances, exhibitions...), apart from those for rehearsals. In other words, the potential performance spaces are scattered throughout the building.

In terms of the model of facilities and organisational structure, the Teatre Lliure makes a gradual change according to each stage, from the cooperative in the early years to the Foundation in the 1980s, with an organisation of public theatre under private management, marked by cyclical crises probably also because of the growth and mutation of the model, and of a (second) building with very high maintenance requirements. It is worth pointing out that, at a different time in their history, the four theatres addressed have become part of the list of public and municipal facilities, although the models that have embraced and invigorated them have been different. The Sala Beckett has joined the programme of Art Factories of Barcelona, in a case

with some similarities with the Espai Brossa in La Seca (the current Escenari Joan Brossa) or the Nau Ivanow, all of them performance and arts venues with a significant prior trajectory, of a subsidised private character. As mentioned, after being a cooperative, a disco and a squat, in a fourth stage of life the Lleialtat Santsenca has managed to work following its own model as a public yet autonomous centre, of co-management between associations. And L'Artesà has evolved from being owned by a private company to being under the municipal umbrella, and in both stages the residents in the neighbourhood are relegated in key decisions, which corresponded to the members in the first stage, and that, in the second, were unilaterally made by the Council.

In terms of urban planning, of the urban situation in relation with the neighbouring roads and nodes, the Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc is in an eccentric situation but close to the theatre area of El Paral·lel. Nevertheless, and despite its closeness with the adjacent performance and education facilities, it is an isolated theatre, with effective synergy with the neighbourhood and the context because of its eccentric location in the city, the dissolution of the project of the Ciutat del Teatre, which might have linked the complex and the urban layout but above all because of its volume and its functioning as a closed “palace”. Both the Sala Beckett (in its second home in Poblenou) and the Lleialtat Santsenca, because of the type of activity and location, have apparently managed (to date) good integration into the neighbourhood. The former thanks to the active proximity of the Institut Quatre Cantons (which is next door) and the closeness with the Centre Cívic Can Felipa. Also because of the great success of its bar (for which in the architecture project there was a plan to open a fourth stage for cabaret), and because of its activity of playwriting workshops and courses keeps the building open all day long, in contrast to most theatres in the city that have much more limited opening and activity times. This also explains why the Sala Beckett can become one of the pillars from which to continue the recovery of the so-called Eix Pere IV. Similarly, the Lleialtat Santsenca also has long opening times, is close to other nodes of activity (such as Les Cotxeres de Sants and Can Batlló) and is a completely permeable centre, with a changing, dynamic and ongoing programme of activities. And L'Artesà? Its theatre inactivity over the years has relegated it to the function of a bar with garden (albeit very popular). We can add, as a suspicion pending confirmation, that the opening of the new theatre might involve, in the near future, the closing of other emblematic venues in El Prat de Llobrehat, such as the Teatre Modern (the current municipal theatre in plaça de la Vila) or the attic of the Torre Muntadas (current home of Teatre Kaddish). There is the risk, faced with the brand new theatre facility, that these venues are considered “redundant”, too old and small, inappropriate and poorly equipped, unnecessary. And, in a fatal fluke, they disappear off the map (as has happened with the original L'Artesà), with a significant loss of heritage diversity and artistic complexity for the city and its residents.



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