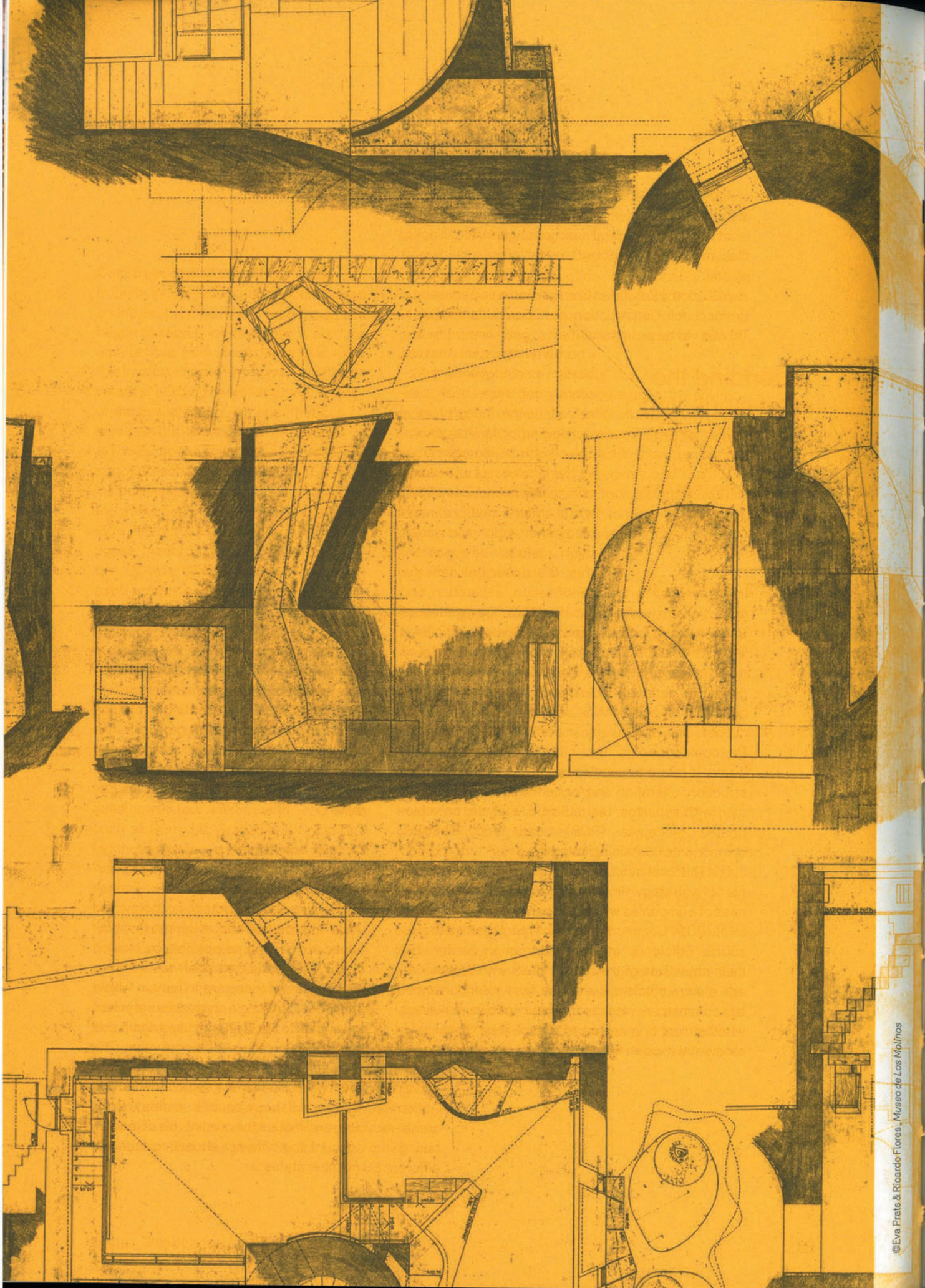


CÉSAR RUÍZ-LARREA | PATXI MANGADO | VALERIA DEL PUERTO  
JOHAN CELSING | TATIANA BILBAO | CHERUBINO GAMBARDELLA  
JOÃO NUNES | ÁNGELA GARCÍA DE PAREDES & IGNACIO PEDROSA  
WILFRIED WANG | JUAN HERREROS | ENRIC BATLLE | BERTA  
BRUSILOVSKY | EVA PRATS & RICARDO FLORES | DIBA SALAM  
CHRISTINE CONIX | BOGDAN & VAN BROECK | GONÇALO BYRNE  
JOSÉ MARÍA EZQUIAGA | ROGER RIEWE | JOSEP BUNYESC  
ARTHUR HUANG | RAYA ANI | ESTEVE BONELL | TONY FRETTON  
IÑAKI ÁBALOS | CAROLINE PIDCOCK | THOMAS HERZOG | JENNIFER  
SIEGAL | FERNANDA CANALES | SAUERBRUCH HUTTON

# #30 VISIONS OF ARCHITECTURE





©Eva Prats & Ricardo Flores, Museo de Los Molinos

## EVA PRATS & RICARDO FLORES

“A period of reflection  
seems to be a  
primary measure  
of sustainability”

What does the word “sustainability” mean to you in terms of architecture? Is it a label? A trend? An effort? A significant challenge? Or is it just a concept implicit in any project of quality?

**EP&RF.** It suggests ancient times: examples of sustainability are mainly found in popular architecture, which adapted to the climate over the course of generations. For this reason, sustainability also suggests long cycles for architecture, both for design and for the useful life of a building. In this sense, the design also has to incorporate the time that the building has to last for. It is very important to allow some time for reflection in the design process; this is a way to make buildings more sustainable. In many architectural contests, you are rated favourably for having designed a sustainable building, but they only give you two weeks to devise the proposal.

Project deadlines are usually so tight that it is very difficult to coordinate the design work with consultation with engineers and other specialists. As sustainability is a concept that must be implicit in the very design of the building, allowing a period for reflection seems to us to be a primary measure of sustainability. >



**Flores & Prats** is a Barcelona-based architectural studio dedicated to reconciling architectural theory with projective and constructive activity. After a long collaboration in the studio of Enric Miralles, Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats embarked upon a career in which research has always been linked to the responsibility of designing buildings. They have worked on the rehabilitation of disused facilities, on schemes involving neighbourhood participation in the design of urban public spaces, and on social housing projects that take into account the influence that such initiatives can have in creating a community. The work of Flores & Prats won: the Grand Award for the Best Work in Architecture of the Royal Academy of Arts of London, in 2009; the International Dedalo Minosse International Prize of Vicenza, in 2011; and the City of Barcelona Award, in 2016. It was also exhibited at the Biennial of Architecture of Venice in 2012, 2014 and 2016.



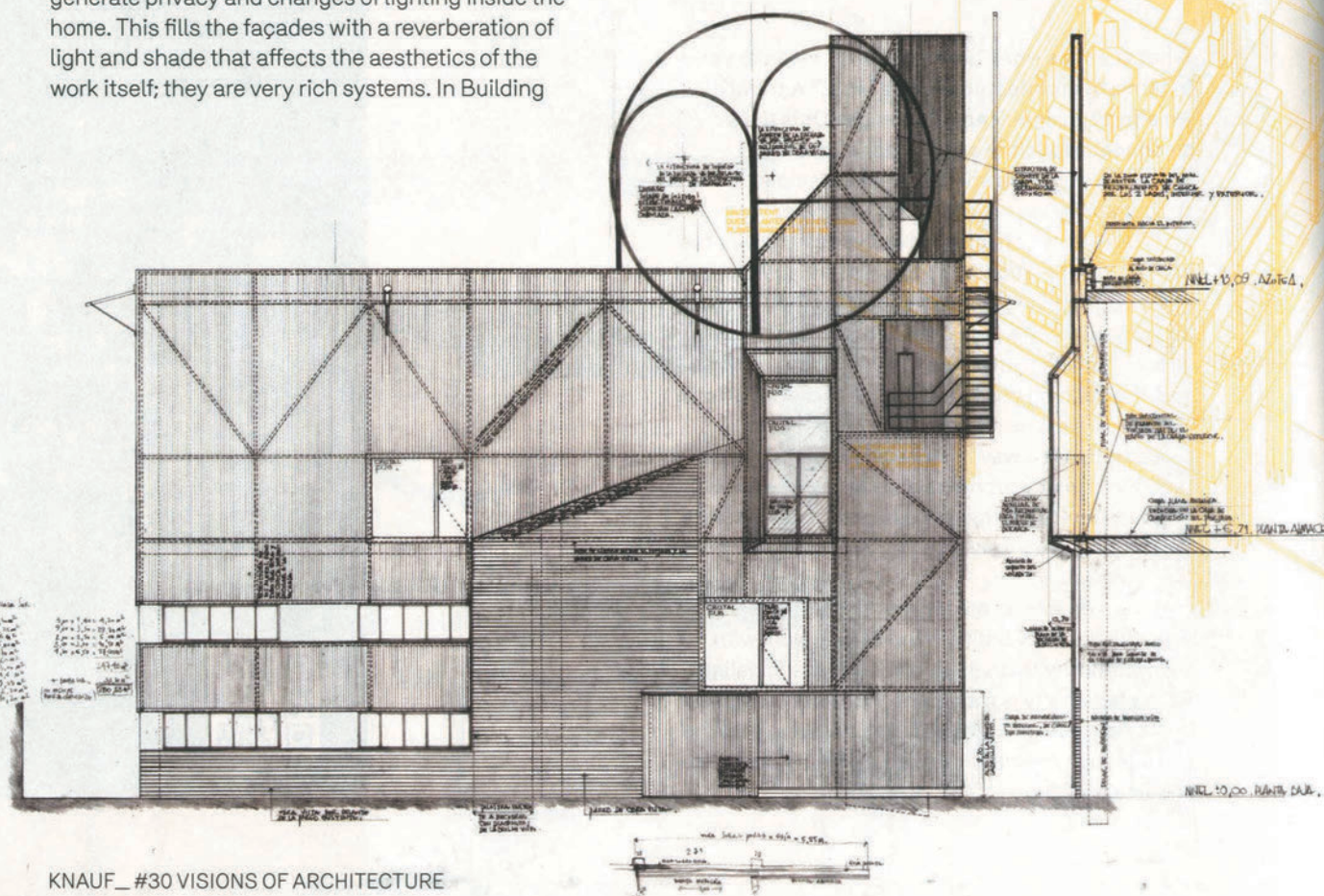


The culture of sustainability allows us to calculate time in larger measures and to better able to anticipate the consequences of the built environment. The market economy makes us think about very short cycles and satisfying very immediate needs. Sustainability, on the other hand, proposes satisfying them in the long term. It is a more complex, more generous, and more ecological way of thinking. Sustainability implies an obligation to consider a natural necessity: working towards the conservation of the planet. Such a concept is intrinsic to the responsibilities inherent in building.

**Do you think that the requirements of sustainability can condition the beauty and character of an architectural work? If so, in what sense?**

**EP&RF.** In the climate in which we live, sustainability favours an exchange with what is outside. Understanding what is outside as being a Mediterranean climate fosters the development of intermediate spaces in architecture; these are elements that lend it more quality and personality. Take solar protection systems, for example: awnings, blinds or other systems for keeping the sun out also allow for the renewal of indoor air and, in turn, generate privacy and changes of lighting inside the home. This fills the façades with a reverberation of light and shade that affects the aesthetics of the work itself; they are very rich systems. In Building

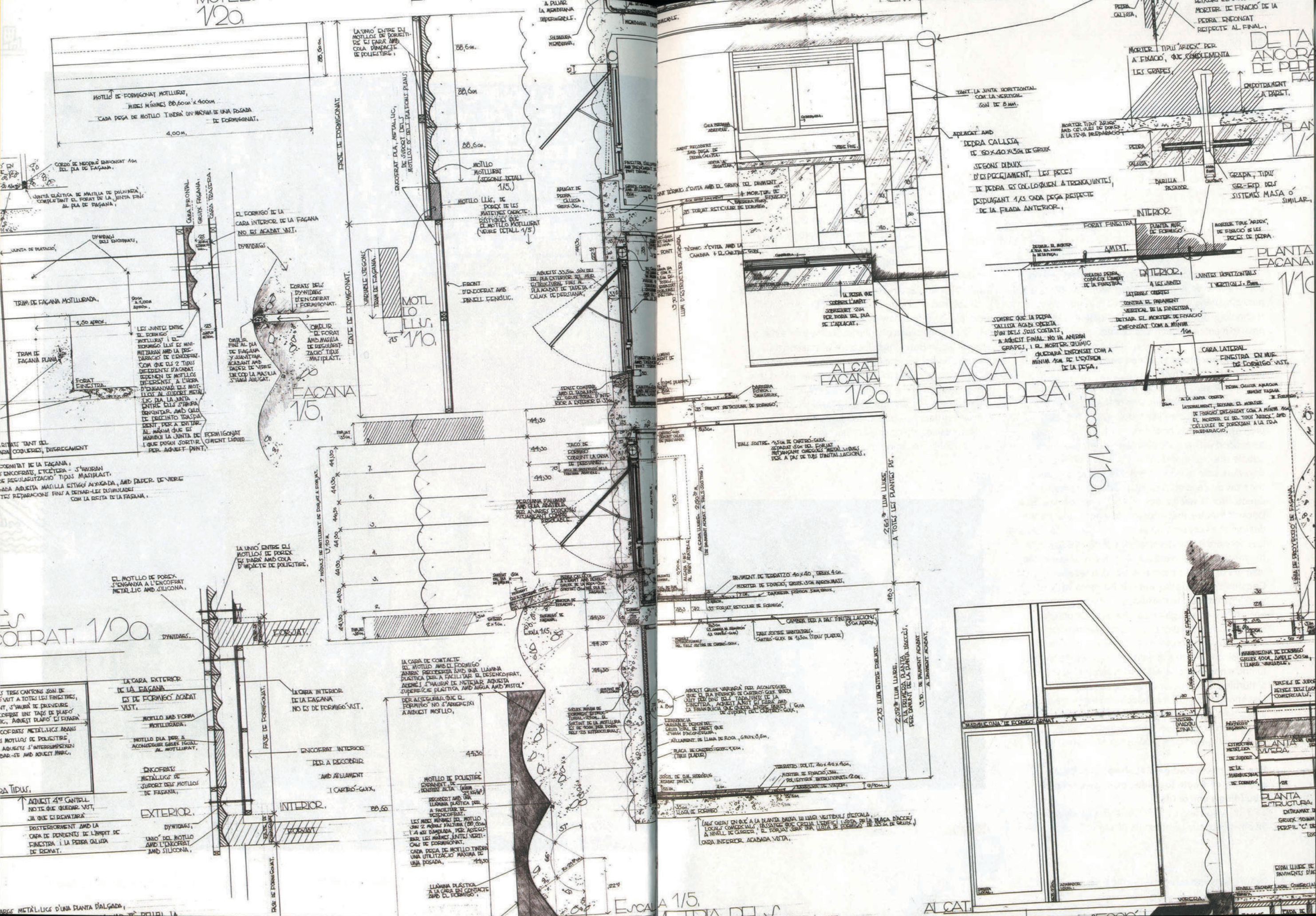
111, we worked by observing the landscape that we had next to us. We considered this landscape in proposals such as those involving ventilation patios that vertically cross the entire section of the building and favour an upward flow of air by convection, thereby providing the possibility for air renewal in the housing units that face these patios. Another issue linked to the climate and landscape of a given place is the construction of the façade incorporating blinds and awnings that protect the interiors from direct sunlight. It is built of concrete, with a wavy silhouette, so that not all of it is always exposed to the sun, with 50% hiding in the shade, like a cactus with its wavy skin. In this case, it is an aesthetic option related to the context.



"WE UNDERSTAND OUR WORK AS THE ORGANISATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF PLACES THAT HELP PEOPLE, WITH AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE TECHNOLOGY AND ALL THE OTHER REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN COORDINATED."









**"THE CONCEPT OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY INTERESTS US BECAUSE, IN BARCELONA, WE HAVE WITNESSED THE DEMOLITION OF VERY BEAUTIFUL BUILDINGS WITHOUT ANY SPECIFIC CRITERIA."**

We understand our work as the organisation and construction of places that help people to feel good, providing them with an environment in which technology and all the other requirements that we have to meet have been coordinated.

**Of all of your projects, which one do you think most highly of? Why?**

**EP&RF.** We recall all of our projects as a continuity; almost as a single whole. One of them has led to another. Normally, we like to talk about the latest project, or the next one. But, we often recall those developed with a good client, whether these were people who brought us closer to a new discipline, or who were able to explain their ideas and to accept the slow process of thought and design. Theatre director Toni Casares was one of them. The new Sala Beckett theatre, in Barcelona, manages to unite the desires of a very ambitious client, in his aim to take a leap forward in the development of his activity, with the renovation of an old building that is linked to the memory of a whole neighbourhood. It recalls Casares's previous life and is in harmony with our working methods. In the end, the new building has been renewed and gained a new use, not only for contemporary theatre, but also for the neighbourhood, and yet it continues to be part of the memory of the place. In terms of methodology, we managed to find a new way of dealing with something without disturbing it, without intervening too much, and yet just enough to allow it to become active once again, in our time. The building was subject to intensive renovation work, but in the end, as Toni said: "It doesn't seem like anything has happened here".

comes about because of the difficulty of incorporating a new function into it, or because of variations in the city caused by new urban plans or by its own growth. Buildings can last for centuries, but it is the city, itself, that

makes them obsolete. So, we take a lot of care in rehabilitating and recovering obsolete or underused structures, seeking to extend their life cycle and adapting them to new uses.

The concept of a circular economy interests us because, in Barcelona, we have witnessed the demolition of very beautiful buildings without any specific criteria. In this sense, we believe that the organisation of the deconstruction of a building is a key issue. We are interested in projected deconstruction, thinking about the separation of elements according to materials and qualities, and valuing their reuse rather than their recycling. x



**How can new paradigms, such as the circular economy or cradle to cradle, be engendered at a building's end of life?**

**EP&RF.** A building's end of life is very rarely linked to an obsolescence of materials. In our opinion, it often

