

**shaping  
the  
legacy**

**A creative  
capital needs  
the courage to  
create its own  
identity. And  
all of us are  
responsible  
for this  
collective  
courage.**

- Perth community member

**form.**

building a state of creativity

**creative  
capital**



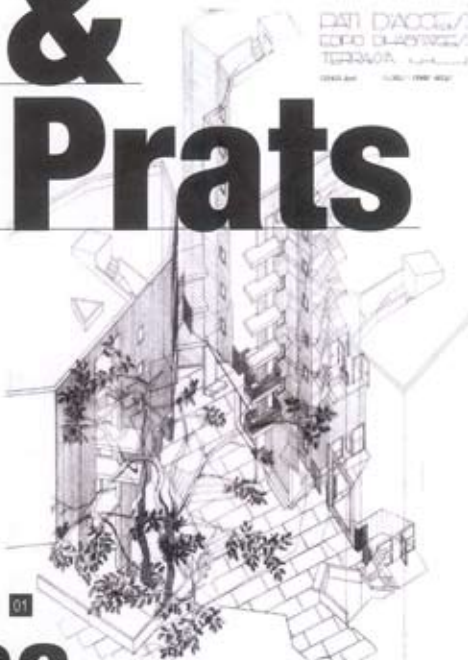
**Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats**  
Flores and Prats, Architects, Barcelona

# interview with Flores & Prats

Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats founded Flores and Prats, Architects in Barcelona in 1997. The studio has been involved in a variety of project types, being particularly active with the Public Administration through open competitions. Their work has spanned residential and public buildings, public spaces, exhibition design and site-specific installations for major cultural institutions and museums.

The office bases its practice in drawing as the main activity. The use of drawing as the tool for discovering and defining projects started at the office of Enric Miralles (where both Flores and Prats worked between 1985 and 1998). Both the experience and communication of the pair's architecture similarly involve a process of drawing out – of information, perception, and understanding. Information is rarely directly translated, just as space and its qualities are encountered sequentially in their built work. The listener/viewer/participant is to invest time and attention for the return of an affecting experience.

Flores and Prats craft a world where sensual, intuitive and intellectual experiences are densely woven to create moments of delight. Convenient summaries cannot be drawn. In this discussion, Flores and Prats were asked to respond to a series of words that characterise their built work and practice, with the aim of slowly drawing out their thoughts.



01



The first word is 'time'.

EP: Time is very important. It is the essence of our work.

RF: We spend a lot of time in our office. We dedicate all the time we can to our drawings. We enjoy doing that.

The second word is 'threshold'.

RF: All our work is about connecting one extent with another. The series of in-between spaces you create for trespassing scales is very important to us. Yesterday, we showed the example of the Museo de los Molinos. There, 'threshold' was about the trespassing of light from outside to inside, and how your eye slowly adapts to that in a series of chambers, and moments of shadows; there's the trespassing of the person from the interior, or the private, to the public. Our work is in manipulating the tensions between things. It could be from a vertical plane to the horizontal; it could be from a very small linked inner house to a public street.

EP: A threshold indicates that you identify one situation and then another situation opposite to it. Threshold spaces link one situation with another, and you provoke a new situation there. You can zoom in and out of a project and judge it from different distances and assess other situations. It is about connection. Identifying thresholds is about identifying new situations.

The third word is 'intuition'.

RF: Intuition is very much linked with the act of drawing; there can be very intuitive moments with a plan. Drawing on big boards with a big piece of paper, your eye gets attracted by something and then you work on that part, and then you are moved to another piece because your pen moves. I think that intuition, and not having a strict direction in your thoughts, are very much linked. I think using intuitive jumps allows you to bring new things into your project.

EP: When you have a new commission, there are a lot of experiences to be had. You go to the place and you try to make a lot of observations of it. In this method of working, intuition gets a lot of importance. We trust a lot.

The fourth word is 'light'.

RF: Light is a fantastic way to discover different qualities. It is very exciting to see different light qualities in different parts of the world. The Mediterranean light is so strong that you can really manipulate it. You can create difficult problems for the light, and the light will always come inside and go, go, go down.

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**Flores and Prats craft a world where sensual, intuitive and intellectual experiences are densely woven to create moments of delight.**



FACHADAS DE  
CALLE CABANES  
ACERA SUR  
HOTEL NUEVO TRIUNFO, BARCELONA  
JUNIO, 2000.





05



06



07

EP: We combine the light with this tradition of massiveness and gravity. The way we work with light is like excavating, because of the building tradition in the Mediterranean.

RF: If you work in other parts of the world – for example in Scandinavia, where the light is much more horizontal – you have to use other devices. But in our case we are very lucky, because the vertical light is so strong that it makes it easier to do our work.

EP: But in every place we feel lucky. There are different possibilities for combining the natural with tradition.

RF: You can see the Mediterranean cities very much like a mass – like a mass of stone with cuts where the light will slip down. It's all about light wells and cuts, and excavating the whole massive thing.

**The fifth word, or words, are 'revealing' and 'discovering'.**

EP: In revealing and discovering, you behave a little bit like a tourist. Sometimes, when you are in another city, your attention is much more awake. When I started travelling a lot, I liked the intensity. We try to be like this when we work – being aware, and trying to discover. It's important to try and look with new eyes, without prejudice. Prejudice is the worst.

RF: You need to look at things in a positive way. Architectural work, for us, should be positive. If you are negative, it is impossible to attract positive themes and reflect them in your work.

**The sixth word is 'intimacy'.**

EP: Intimacy is something that can happen for us all over the city. It's nice that you can feel comfortable in different places. Something we would like to push is that intimacy can happen in different parts of the city, not only in your house. It's not related to the private. This is important to us, and it's also quite a necessity, because Barcelona city has now become so expensive that it's difficult to buy a house. Or maybe your house is not big enough. So in your mind, the city starts working as a house – you might look for a place where you can concentrate with a friend. So it's some kind of quality you look for. You don't relate it to the house any more.

**The seventh word is 'drawing'.**

RF: Well, drawing is our main activity in the office. And as you get more and more busy with things – teaching and travel and the work – you miss the years when you were just drawing at the board. So now when we have time to draw we are very happy. Drawing has to do with the relationship of the mind and the hand. It's like thinking with the pencil. It's very much a physical activity. We use computers in the office, but when you talk to me about drawing, I always think about this physical relationship with the paper and the pencil. I think the drawing is a reflection of your thoughts. So once you draw your thoughts, you are ready to critique them. And then your mind continues thinking.

EP: We trust in drawing as a graphical thought. The pencil is like an extension of your body. You and the pencil and paper are at one. Drawing is like writing for us. To make connections with things, architecture must relate to the city and all the traces and lines that you find there. Our work is very much about traces as clues – it means drawing them, and drawing them in relation to the old. You can tell a lot when you visit buildings about whether they were well drawn or not. You can tell if something was not well drawn – there are no connections.





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**In recent years, we've been more and more attracted to the participation of the client, whether there are many clients or one client. We are trying to resolve our work in a social reality.**

Ricardo Flores

RF: It's like sewing. If you know how to sew well, things connect well.

EP: Even in a very new place, you can see whether the building has been drawn well.

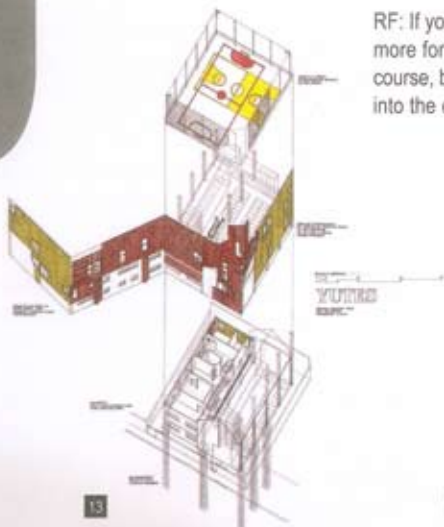
The eighth word is 'participation'.

RF: In recent years, we've been more and more attracted to the participation of the client, whether there are many clients or one client. We are trying to resolve our work in a social reality. Architects work in a social landscape much more than in a specific one, or an invention of oneself.

EP: What you are building is for the user. In the end you want it to be a gift. We never think of our projects in terms of necessity. They're always a gift. If people enjoy it, then it is a gift.

RF: If you think of participation in the process, then you'll draw much more for the users. You always incorporate your own interests, of course, but the participation makes your project much more integrated into the city or landscape. □

- 01. Barcelona Housing Project
- 02. Barcelona Housing Project
- 03. Hotel Nuevo Triunfo
- 04. Hotel Nuevo Triunfo
- 05. Mills Museum, Mallorca
- 06. YUTE's Warehouse
- 07. Barcelona House (concept model)
- 08. Plaza Nicaragua
- 09. Candy
- 10. Plaza En El Besòs
- 11. Candy Shop, Plaza En El Besòs
- 12. Square in Lerida
- 13. YUTE's Warehouse
- 14. Barcelona Housing Project



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