

MARCH 2017

METRO Society



The Men's Issue

BAND OF BROTHERS

Best friends Marlon Stockinger, Matteo Guidicelli, and Ivan Carapiet come together to celebrate their passion for sports

GRAND SPACE

by METROSOCIETY STAFF

photographs by ADRIÀ GOULA

special thanks to SUSANNE LAMBERT and FLORES & PRATS ARCHITECTS

Sala Beckett opens in Barcelona. In open dialogue with history, the architectural project by Flores & Prats has restored the old building of the Pau i Justícia cooperative, adapting it for new theatrical uses

Arrival under the arch and skylight. The light that filters from above through a skylight into the entrance area shows the complexity of the spaces and delivers a sense of unity to the whole building. Here, in the lobby of the old cooperative, it guides the public towards the performance areas.

A cultural space designed by Flores & Prats opens in Barcelona; it is characterized by extraordinary vivacity and a surprising relationship with history, which tends to redefine the theme of architectural restoration. The new Sala Beckett, opened in November 2016 in Poblenou, in the Sant Martí district, is dedicated to theater, experimentation, and training. This place for meeting and creativity found a space in the headquarters of the old peace and justice cooperative (Pau i Justícia). The design by architects Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats reflects the dense memories profoundly rooted in the culture of the historical industrial district, which had already undergone significant changes for the 1992 Olympics and has now become vibrant due to the presence of numerous artists and creative talents.

Having grown for 25 years through the commitment of the director José Sanchis Sinisterra, Sala Beckett has been a central place in the culture of Barcelona for some time. The institution will be run in its new location by Toni Casares, who has worked with the architects Flores and Prats, winners of the competition announced in 2011, for a long time to create a space capable of interpreting its important role and relaunching it into the life of Poblenou. To come up with a design for the new location, the architects Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats spent much time learning about the production activities and theatrical experimentation, discussing it with Toni Casares and the other people that would then make use of the new spaces. They visited Théâtre des Boues du Nord by Peter Brook and studied several cases, enabling them to develop a personal and profound awareness of the subject matter, which they then reinterpreted inside the old building with their meticulous ability to dialogue with spaces and their histories.

The design by Flores & Prats stems from the spatial and decorative qualities of the existing building, a part of the identity assumed by the city of Barcelona at a time when the workers' associations emerged along with their surprising capacity to create space for entertainment. Each significant element has been carefully collected, from the frames to the doors, the polychrome tiles, rose windows, the stratifications present in the masonry fabric and the plasterwork. The design process included an in-depth study of the environmental characteristics, identified and developed through numerous drawings and detailed study models.

The building is located at the intersection of Carrer de Pere IV and Carrer de Batista, in the heart of Poblenou. The corner opening in the façade makes the activities carried out on the inside visible and accessible. Most of the rooms located on the ground floor are used for public activities, and this establishes a relationship of continuity with the urban fabric. Immediately after the entrance, visitors come upon a welcoming, almost domestic setting. People can get a drink at the bar or sit in the restaurant while waiting for the performance to start, or they can sit on the benches or visit the box office to buy a ticket.

Characterized by high spatial articulation and surprising vivacity, the ground floor also has rooms that are not accessible to the public, such as offices and changing rooms for the performers, connected to the main performance area by a peripheral corridor that allows them to enter the stage from different points.



and thereby to accommodate the various stage structures planned in this room for 200 people. Rehearsal rooms are located on the first floor along with another larger room, the former ballroom, which can be used both as a workshop and as a second space for performances. Other rehearsal rooms and service areas are found on the second floor.

In the course of the years, Flores & Prats gave evidence of this expertise with a series of projects, like the Museum of the Mills (Es Jonquet, Palma de Mallorca, 1998-2002), Providencia House (Badalona, Barcelona, 2002-2008). Their project for the Casal Balaguer Cultural Center in Palma de Mallorca (1996-2016), developed with Duch-Pizá, received several recognitions; it was finalist in the FAD Award (Fomento de las Artes Decorativas) and was presented in the Spanish pavilion at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale (2016), that was awarded with the Golden Lion.

Site visits, lectures, exhibitions, a book (*Thought by Hand*, Arquine, 2014): they each stitched the thread for a

complex narrative whose protagonist is an architecture that can't be simply bound to a specific time.

Flores & Prats

Flores & Prats is an architecture office from Barcelona, dedicated to confront theory and academic practice with design and construction activity.

After their experience at Enric Miralles' office, Ricardo Flores and Eva Prats have developed a career where research has been always linked to the responsibility to make and to build.

The office has worked on rehabilitation of old structures for new occupations, as well as on neighbors' participation in the design process of urban public spaces, and on social housing and its capacity to create community. But they have also experienced using film to document architecture, or with menus of edible architecture for their exhibitions in Barcelona and Copenhagen as a way to bring their work closer to a broader public.

The work of Flores & Prats is widely awarded, published, and exhibited. They

have been part of the Wallpaper Directory of Emerging Offices in 2007, obtained the Grand Award for the Best Work in Architecture at the Royal Academy of Arts in London 2009 for the rehabilitation project Mills Museum in Palma de Mallorca, and the International Award Dedalo Minosse of Vicenza 2011 for the new campus for Microso in Milan.

Their work on the rehabilitation of the Cultural Centre Casal Balaguer, exhibited at the Biennale di Architettura di Venezia in 2014 and in 2016, was nominated for the Mies van der Rohe Award 2015 and received the FAD Award (Fomento de las Artes Decorativas) in 2016.

Construction of Sala Beckett - Obrador Internacional de Dramaturgia (Poblenou, Barcelona), a project they started in 2011, was completed in 2016.

Flores and Prats are both professors at the School of Architecture of Barcelona, and have been invited professors to several universities around the world. ■

Below and opposite page: The Bar Beckett during a summer workshop, also where people can get a drink at the bar or sit in the restaurant while waiting for the performance to start.





Above: The vestibule up and down. Right: Confections of the former social club. Far right: Theater performers' changing room at the ground floor

"The new Sala Beckett is a space where the audience member enters and breathes, understands, feels that they are not customers for an industrial product, but part of a dialogue, a person who makes sense of what is presented on stage."
 —Toni Casares, drammaturgo e direttore di Sala Beckett



Each significant element has been carefully collected, from the frames to the doors, the polychrome tiles, rose windows, the stratifications present in the masonry fabric and the plasterwork.