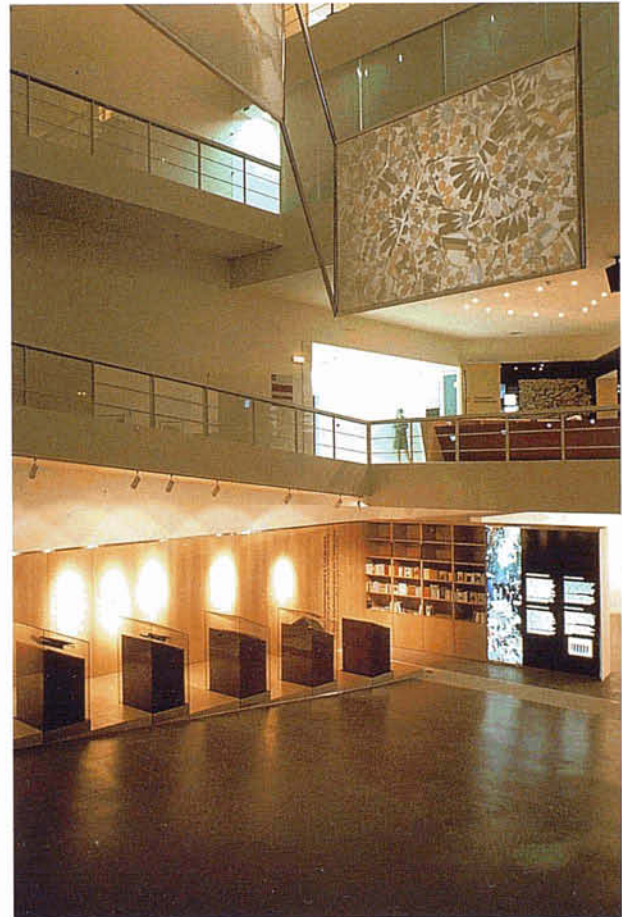


THE CATALAN PAVILION AT EXPO'92 IN SEVILLE



THE CATALAN PAVILION HAS OPTED FOR AN OPAQUE, NEUTRAL FORM, THE CHOICE OF DISCRETION AND SOBRIETY BEING TAKEN TO ITS ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCES. IN THE ENTRANCE, A MURAL BY ANTONI TÀPIES ROUNDS OFF THIS EMPHASIS ON SIMPLICITY.

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The pavilions at a contemporary universal exhibition have to resolve two basic architectural problems. On the one hand, a solution is needed to the internal functionality; this means creating areas of natural light for those spaces in which people move about and for exhibiting certain types of object, and areas of artificial light, opaque areas, for presenting the audio-visual material that dominates all today's pavilions. As well as this, a container has to be designed that will present an expressive image to the exterior. With respect to these two conditioning factors, the Catalan pavilion, designed by the architects Pere Llimona and Xavier Ruiz Vallès, has opted for very specific solutions. The building is arranged in such a way that it is set back and closed on the outside, with a series of ramps and terraces on the inside. An overhead light crosses the large central space. This means that there are some areas inside which have a diffuse natural light and dark lateral spaces with a predominance of artificial light or audio-visual set-ups. The solution is therefore a hybrid one, which opts neither for the closed box nor for the conventional pavilions with transparent, fluid forms. The aim is to try and make the most of the qualities of both models.

The overall form of the building avoids octagons and parallel lines to adopt a complex geometry. At the points and corners formed by the star-shaped layout of each floor are located the lifts, stairs and services. Access to the ground floor is by the openings formed by the building's set-back arrangement, with the three V-shaped wings. The large central patio is covered by a lattice-work structure of giant beams. For reasons connected with the programme, the Catalan pavilion gives a preferential position to the bar-restaurant space, located at the top, at the end of the series of ramps that run round the central opening, leading via a flight of stairs to the end of the "architectural promenade". This is therefore the spot with the best views over the lake and most natural light. Not only this, while the other areas are relatively small, the restaurant is of a respectable size. It is definitely the spot that has achieved the highest degree of representativeness. It is the only part of the building overlooking the exterior. The furnishings include objects designed by Catalan designers like Oscar Tusquets, Pep Bonet and others, and each week a different Catalan restaurant is responsible for the catering. While the restaurant occupies a privi-

leged position, the other areas are more secondary, such as the temporary exhibition hall—where a series of artists are exhibiting, also on a weekly basis, each one introduced by a different art critic—, which is housed on the attractively shaped basement level. There is also an area explaining the industrialization of Catalonia, another showing the importance of the printing press, books and of the Catalan language, and another which presents a brief selection from the evolution of our country's art. Finally, there is a shop selling everything from pictures to publications on Catalan authors, artists and architects. As regards the external appearance, the Catalan pavilion is the one that has chosen the most opaque and neutral form out of all the pavilions surrounding the lake and representing the autonomous communities. In this sense, the choice of discretion and sobriety has been taken to the ultimate consequences. This silent shell, occupying only part of the space available to it, built of white stone, offers as its only expression some horizontal and vertical openings that light the interior, and, just at the entrance, a mural by Antoni Tàpies that rounds off this emphasis on a concept based on simplicity, realism and austerity. ■