

L'àtic Vernacle represents an opportunity to rethink housing in Valencia and a chance to experiment with the traditional and the contemporary.

Nestling in the north of a town in the area known as l'Horta de València, against a backdrop of orange groves and a disused ceramic tile factory, which recalls the splendour of a bygone age. Next to the historic centre, standing among anonymous mid 20th century houses, was the empty home that today has been converted into 'L'atic Vernacle'.

The sounds of blinds being raised are clearly audible, and the red tiled roofs of the neighbouring stretch out into the horizon, even further than the eye can see; the buildings that reflect a former frenzy share their party walls with traditional Valencian houses that still boast the features that remind us that we are on familiar territory: a balcony with a typical Alicante blind or whitewashed façades witness and reflect the traditional identity of a people, our people.

INTERVENTION CONCEPT

As soon as you cross the threshold, the endless covering of handmade baked clay beneath your feet tempts you to slip off your shoes and walk barefoot. That done, the first thing that catches your eye are the white Alicante blinds that conceal the pantry, storing everything a contemporary kitchen could need.

This home provides simple solutions for the needs of the modern family: large, light-filled spaces furnished in a thoughtful manner, the result of a reflection and abstraction of Valencian tradition. The materials were selected in accordance with past memories and the desire for functionality: fired terracotta, white ceramic tiles, whitewashed walls, Macael marble in the kitchen, wooden furniture and light-filled spaces.

The limits are traced in an adaptation for everyday life. The Alicante blinds enclose wardrobes, bathrooms or provide the necessary privacy. The entire house is flooded with light; the corridor is no longer merely a means of moving from one place to another; instead it is a light-filled area that opens up onto new spaces.

CERAMIC TILES AT THE HEART OF THE PROJECT

Ceramic tiles represent a unifying element for the entire space, featuring terracotta on the floors and white ceramic tiles for the skirting and wet zones. The terracotta tiles in a 12 x 24 x 2.5 cm format with a natural finish add the natural effect of a handcrafted material that has been dried naturally.

The grid layout of the terracotta tiles reflects a contemporary touch for a material capable of transporting us back to a bygone age, without the need to resort to the use of traditional patterned layouts.

The use of white ceramic tiles reflects both art and technique: the ceramic tiles featured on the skirting, in the wet zones and suspended shelving in the sitting room are handmade square 12.5 x 12.5 cm ones with a mother-of-pearl finish. Special porcelain tiles were also used for the changes of level for a smoother, less strident transition.

A traditional and natural method was used to protect the terracotta tiles: an age-old water-repellent technique for the flooring, based on natural animal milk caseins.

As soon as the laid tiles had dried, they were sprayed with milk every two days. This process was repeated four times, giving them a matchless lustre and gloss. This treatment makes the terracotta both shiny and waterproof, as well as highly resistant to wear and tear and easy to clean.