

First prize in the Architecture Category

A new headquarters for the Valencia Construction Sector Employment Foundation
(L'Horta Vella Bétera Industrial Estate, Valencia)

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Photographs: Mikel Muruzabal

REPORT ON THE NEW HEADQUARTERS FOR THE VALENCIA CONSTRUCTION SECTOR EMPLOYMENT FOUNDATION

The new headquarters of the Valencia Construction Sector Employment Foundation (FLCCV) are set in rural and semi-industrial surroundings. The large plot is surrounded by fields of olive and fruit trees and is bounded to the north by the Carraixet ravine.

In keeping with the Valencia region's physical and cultural backdrop, a decision was taken to use ceramic tiles for the construction and image of the new employment centre, since they are one of the region's flagship manufactured products, used extensively there.

The building projects a simple and clear-cut image. It comprises a series of interconnected volumes that together transmit the sense of institutional representativeness required of a building of these characteristics: a volumetric and constructive clarity capable of underpinning the teaching work and values that the Foundation applies there. Its location and design are the result of a formal and functionally ordered pattern of separate sections or volumes grouped together by means of a flat pergola that connects and unites all the buildings thanks to its carefully adapted modulation and constructive alignment.

Given the complexity of the uses and connections between the various zones, the building is organised on a single floor, free from architectural barriers, around two outdoor courtyards, each with their own character. These courtyards play an essential role in terms of the internal organisation, either as a space for outdoor activities (work courtyard), or as spaces for networking, communication and relaxation (leisure courtyard).

The layout of the volumes and the differentiated uses guarantee optimum functionality and outstanding soundproofing, as well as excellent natural light. Their flexibility makes them ideal multipurpose spaces, allowing for the zoning of activities and programming of independent or simultaneous activities in the building, guaranteeing the capacity to effectively keep them separate.

The exterior differences between the volumes gives the whole a sense of representativeness. This is particularly in evidence in the case of the workshops, which

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are taller, and to a lesser extent the lecture theatre and the offices with their skylights. The rest of the spaces, namely the classrooms, offices and changing rooms, are located partially under the roof.

The architecture of the new building offers an optimum use of space and functional, environmental and natural light conditions that will guarantee excellence in both theoretical and practical training activities. In this sense, the use of natural light in the classrooms and workshops has been resolved in accordance with the various teaching requirements: the workshops are illuminated by means of skylights, most of which face north-northeast, whilst the remaining areas feature openings in the façade with external sunlight control.

The dialectic use of the structure is of particular importance in the design of this building. Well-ordered and always visible, the solution reflects the same constructive spirit as the other materials and options deployed. The finishes of this building are a reflection of the construction process, taking advantage of the building details to create essentially visual resources.

The 1000x3000x3mm ceramic tile featured defines and modulates the entire building, creating a sense of geometric harmony that is then re-dimensioned in accordance with the width and height of the ceramic tile used.

Our search for a formal material that both suits and is adaptable to a modular structure revealed that large format ceramic tiles are a versatile and flexible architectural resource. Flexibility in formal configuration, material quality and the plethora of surface characteristics make ceramic tiles an element able to accompany and unify the overall image of the centre, providing it with the desired identity and character. It has been used on the ventilated façade of all the building volumes, and fixed onto galvanised steel sheets on pedestrian door, facility registers and vehicle doors.

Inside, the 100x100x8mm ceramic tiles create surfaces of outstanding quality, suitable for use in the most challenging collective spaces such as dressing rooms and bathrooms.