Special Mention in the Architecture Category

Malaga University's Faculty of Psychology and Speech Therapy (Calle Doctor Ortiz Ramos, s/n. Ampliación del Campus de Teatinos, Malaga)

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Photographs: Javier Callejas Sevilla

REPORT

AN ARCHITECTURAL PROPOSAL, AN INHABITED VIRTUAL FOREST

The architectural proposal presents a new concept in contextualisation by adhering strictly to the plot that is the objective of this intervention and resolving the urban nature of this extension of the campus. In turn, it represents a radical solution by dividing the building programme into two sections: a hermetic, white ceramic suspended body that houses the teaching and research activities, as well as the teaching staff's facilities; and a permeable vitreous volume in contact with the ground where all the public functions of the faculty take place. The idea is that of a large tree or architectural forest where teaching and learning unfurl among its branches.

OUTER CLADDING

The idea behind the outer cladding of this forest is to emulate the leaves on a tree which, as they move in the sunlight, capture different degrees and shades of light. The result is a mosaic of sensations and elements of light and materials that range from a natural glazed appearance to more metallic and even stony tones, depending on the angle of the sunlight. In this sense, the ceramic cladding as a whole reminds us of a muscle that contracts and expands whilst maintaining the balance of the built volume, in the manner of a snake's skin. This universe of light is a combination of painstaking technological work in the factory, concave morphology tests and the development of matt glazes, together with the final geometry and grouting.

INDUSTRIALISED MODULAR DESIGN: In terms of innovation, the overriding aim of this project was to achieve a continuous skin that would not alter the spatial scale of the building, requiring the absence of visible joints to create a visual sense of a whole. A further condition was to avoid the use of large format tiles that would require anchoring. Consideration of these factors led to the decision to opt for a small 10 mm slim round tile with a 120 mm diameter which, once mounted on 9-tile meshes, could be installed on the façade and then grouted with a flexible cement-effect grouting that covers all the façades and creates a continuous unitary effect. This would allow for the precise adaptation to the façade, forming a unique and very special application.

Another construction challenge was to absorb the vertical expansion joints on the supporting panels under the ceramic skin. The chosen solution was a material offering greater elasticity than grouting capable of adapting to the twisting shapes formed by the circular tiles on the façade, allowing for a precise and controlled flow between the ceramic leaves, blending in perfectly with the whole.

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