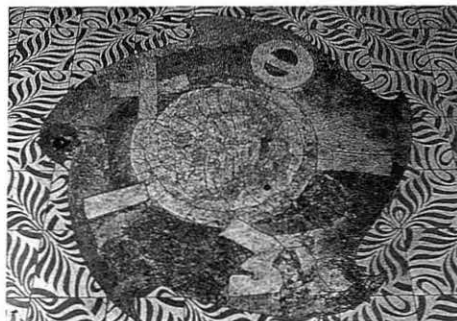
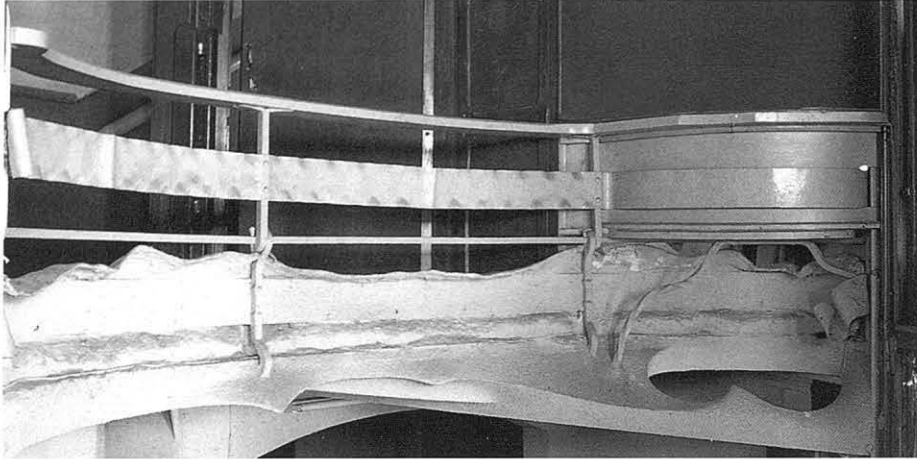


1908

Workers' Association Theatre

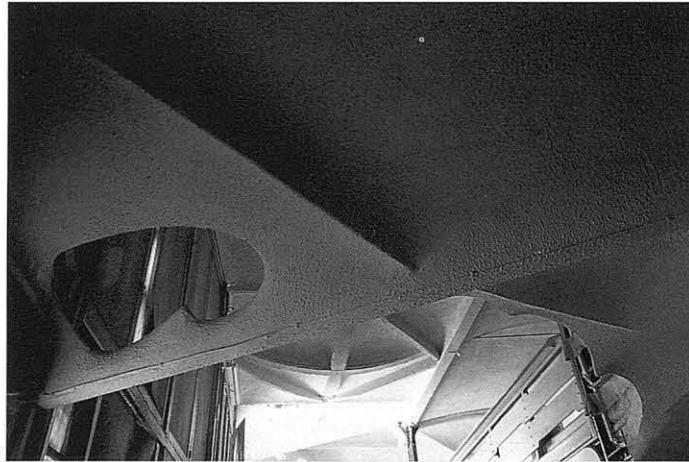




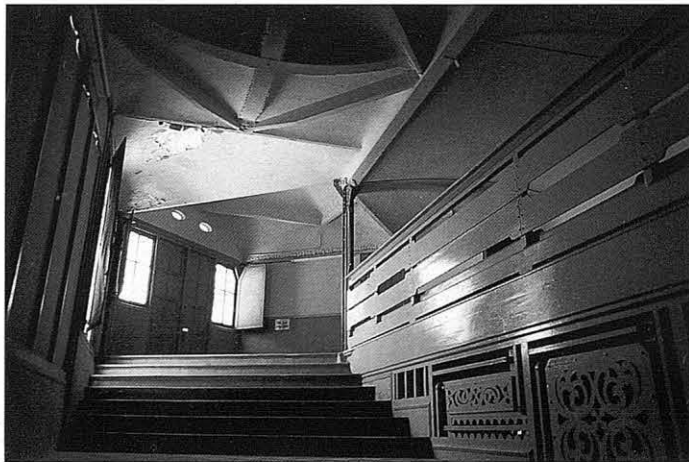
2

Previous page: Main staircase (first-floor landing): detail of the flooring. The deteriorated letters show the year of construction (1911) and also evoke religious symbols.

Main staircase: beginning on the ground floor and details of the bannisters. On the first floor the bannister is crowned by a small sheet-metal and wood belvedere that looks over the stair-well. Throughout the hall area —corridors and foyers— the ceilings and floor-ceiling structure corners feature maritime motifs —surf, waves, torn sails; a storm that gives place to the «calm» of the interior: the stage room.



3



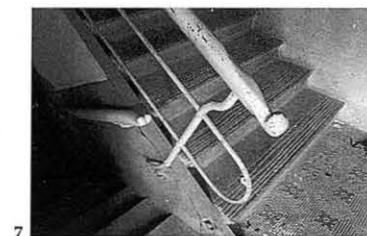
4

Main staircase: detail of the flooring in the first section. The designs, engraved directly onto the concrete, again reproduce marine motifs.

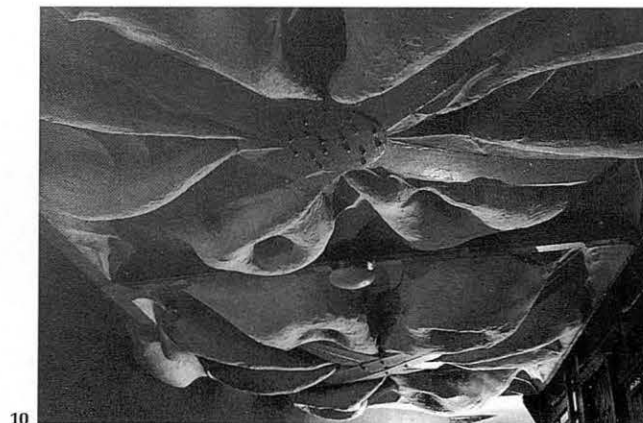




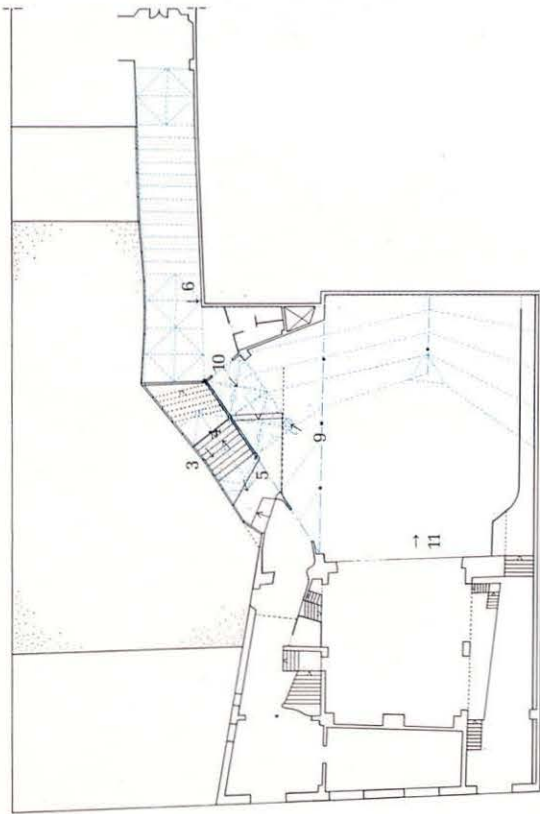
Linking passage with the Rambla. Detail of the treatment of an arris.



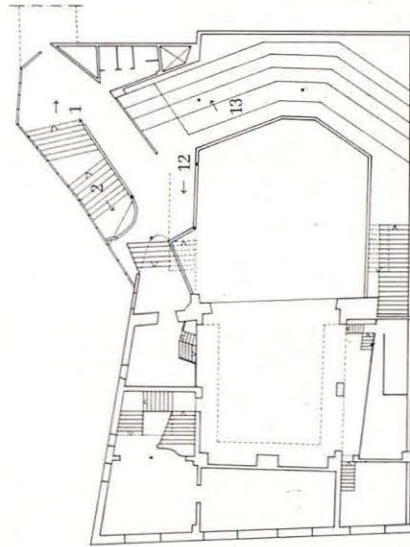
First floor. Access staircase to the upper hall. The bannister is conceived as an enormous knitting needle resting on light metallic spheres.
Foyer on the ground floor. The knot joining the beams becomes the keel of a boat among the waves.



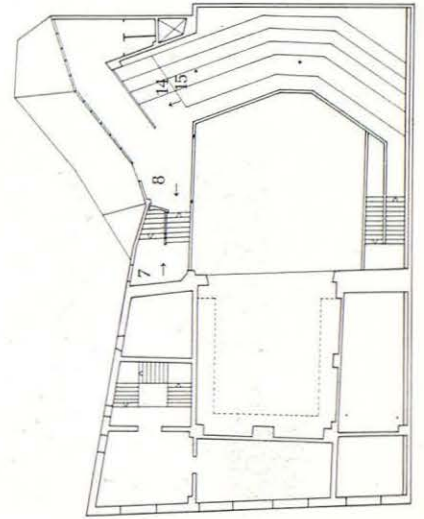
Ground-floor foyer (between the main staircase and conference room). On the ceiling sinuous forms evoke the movement of the waves or of unfurled sails.



Ground floor - The forms of the ceilings are represented in blue.



Plan of first floor.



Plan of second floor.



11

Interior of the scenery room and detail of one of the first-floor boxes. The back staircase providing access to the second floor goes through the partition wall and reveals the lower traces of the steps.



12



13

Details of the ceiling in the amphitheatre on the first floor. The structural system consists of slender metallic columns supporting slanted beams, thus directly forming the slope of the amphitheatre tiers.



14



15

Screen that separates the second-floor hall from the amphitheatre tiers. General view and detail.

iwish I did not have to keep them only in my memory

Over the last two or three months I have been to the *Teatre del Patronat Obrer de Tarragona* (Tarragona Workers' Association Theatre) several times, each time with different people. Nearly all of them were scholars, experts, but above all enthusiasts of Josep M. Jujol's work. For most of them it was the first time they had managed to look inside the theatre they know so well from their studies. They wanted to see Jujol's first building: the independent one, planned and built by him alone. They were sure, however, bearing in mind what little there is in print on the subject, that hardly anything is left of the original.

They always entered the theatre round the back, through the stage entrance in Carrer d'Armanyà. Sometimes we walked around the first two floors which surround the stage. Other times we went straight (through the side door) to the stage entrance. From there onwards the torch slowly started to bring the theatre to light. As the hand holding the torch gently moved, the light wandered over the walls, the floors, and especially the ceilings. I had to keep my eyes wide open, because on every visit I always discovered some new detail, something we had so far overlooked. Usually the findings did nothing but confirm what everybody had already read about the theatre. One day they discovered the remains of the parabola arch under the iron beam that made the stage bigger. Another day they found the bottom of a boat hanging from the waves and the ceiling. But every day somebody would find the name Maria hidden in the handrail.

The most inquisitive felt they had not had enough by just

looking. They liked to scrape off the awful light, chocolate-coloured dye which was stuck to everything. They would always end up finding some trace of paint (supposedly original); transparent yellow, blue and pink.

Some of them would spend some time dismantling—even more—the false ceiling, to make sure that the original was still there and all in one piece. The most daring struck vigorously at the railings when they found out that, luckily, they kept intact: the real iron railings.

As always, they were discovering Jujol little by little and although the mutilation of the stage and railings, and the blinding of the stalls and windows in the corridor made it very difficult for us to get a clear idea of what the theatre was originally like, nevertheless we were sure that underneath the ruins of the Metropol Cinema, the Workers' Association Theatre was still intact.

Any record of Josep M. Jujol's work on the site can only be found in a brief report about the inauguration in *La Cruz*, January 19th 1910, which talks about Gaudi and his disciple «Pujol» as the authors of the repairs to the theatre. A typing mistake which was (as Ràfols tells us) to haunt Jujol even in his death notice.

According to the records, the architect Ramon Salas i Ricomà built a building for the Workers' Association in Carrer Armanyà in 1894. Probably this building and a small annex (precise date not known) which also looked onto Carrer Armanyà was the only property belonging to the Workers' Association until it purchased the building and the garden on the site of 46 Rambla Nova, built, twenty years earlier, according to an excellent project by Fontserè. This made it possible to build the new theatre with an entrance that leads into the city's main street.

The challenge for Jujol was, firstly, to make the new entrance from the Rambla level as it

was two and half metres above the garden. Secondly, he had to fit the theatre into an extremely small area of 17 by 20 metres. He decided on two equally bold solutions. To make the entrance level with the ground he decided to build it on the first floor. To make everything fit in such a small area he decided to build the stage precisely in the building constructed by Salas in Carrer Armanyà. In this way it «provided shade» for the stage.

Probably Jujol was not as worried about building a beautiful theatre *à la Italiana* as about achieving an open space which offered enough room for the variety of activities of an *Ateneu* (cultural association). In order to make it light he had to choose iron and that is what he did. The hall was built with three good 13-metre beams, four metres between each of them. They hold a simple ceiling of iron rafters with spaces in between. But they rest on three slim 8-metre pillars, each with a diameter of only 26 cm. This gives an extraordinary sense of transparency to the room, through the corridor and the staircase—maybe the heart of the building—and onto the garden. The corridor next to the partition, which opens completely onto the garden, was also made entirely of iron; of a much finer structure of lintels with rivetted metallic profiles, making pillars and lintels which hold seven small, extremely flat round intersections made of three sheets of adobe.

The light, fragile frame, where the ornamenting magic and professional virtue were to rule from that time onwards, had already been built. Jujol the architect gives way to Jujol the craftsman, who stays on to finish the job. As from now, the fire of thorns on top of the roof, or the unfolding plaster, the sensual railings... are simply wonderful anecdotes that fill up and give flavour to the building. But I wish I did not have to keep them only in my memory.