

# 1920

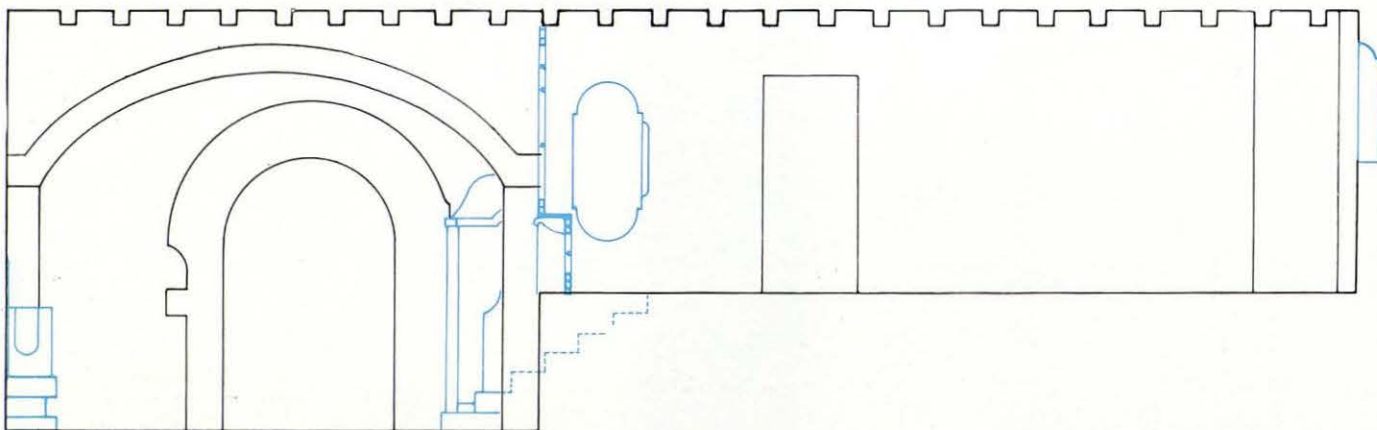
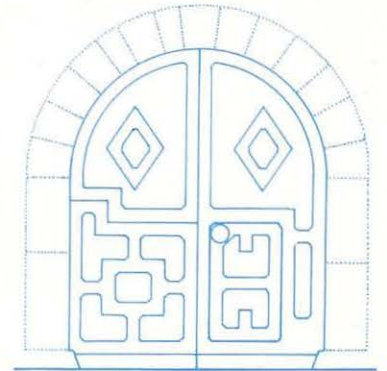
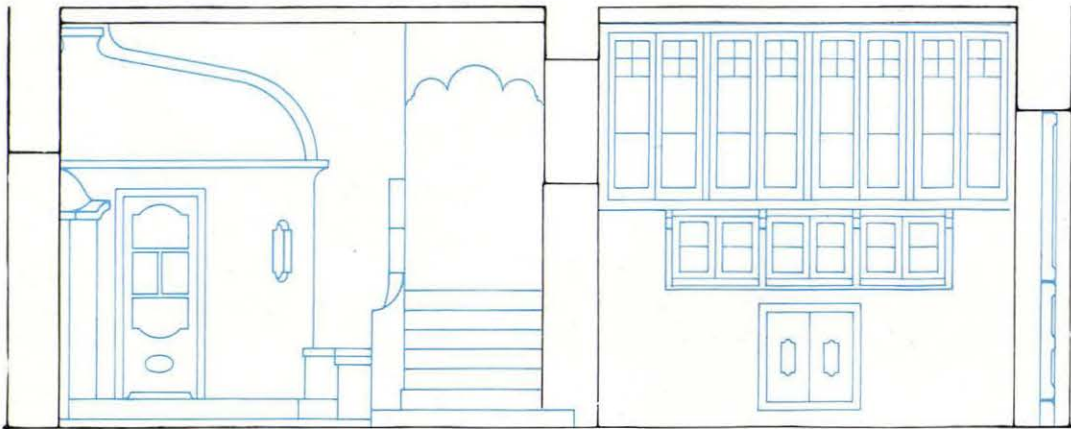
Casa Andreu, alterations to a building





Sideboard above the hall. The dining-room, in the background, is raised half a level.

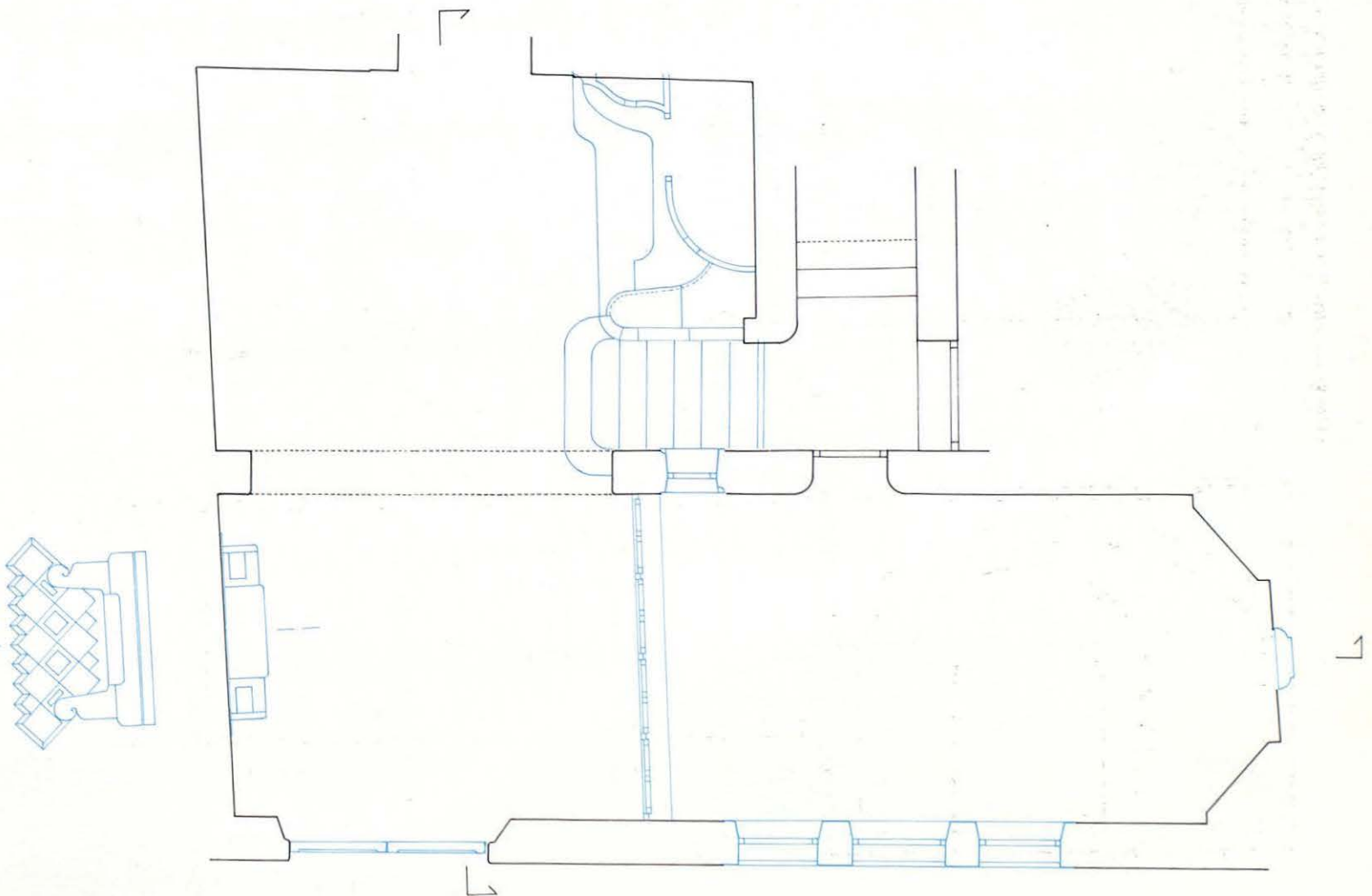
Previous page: Detail of the entrance door with Jujol's initial.

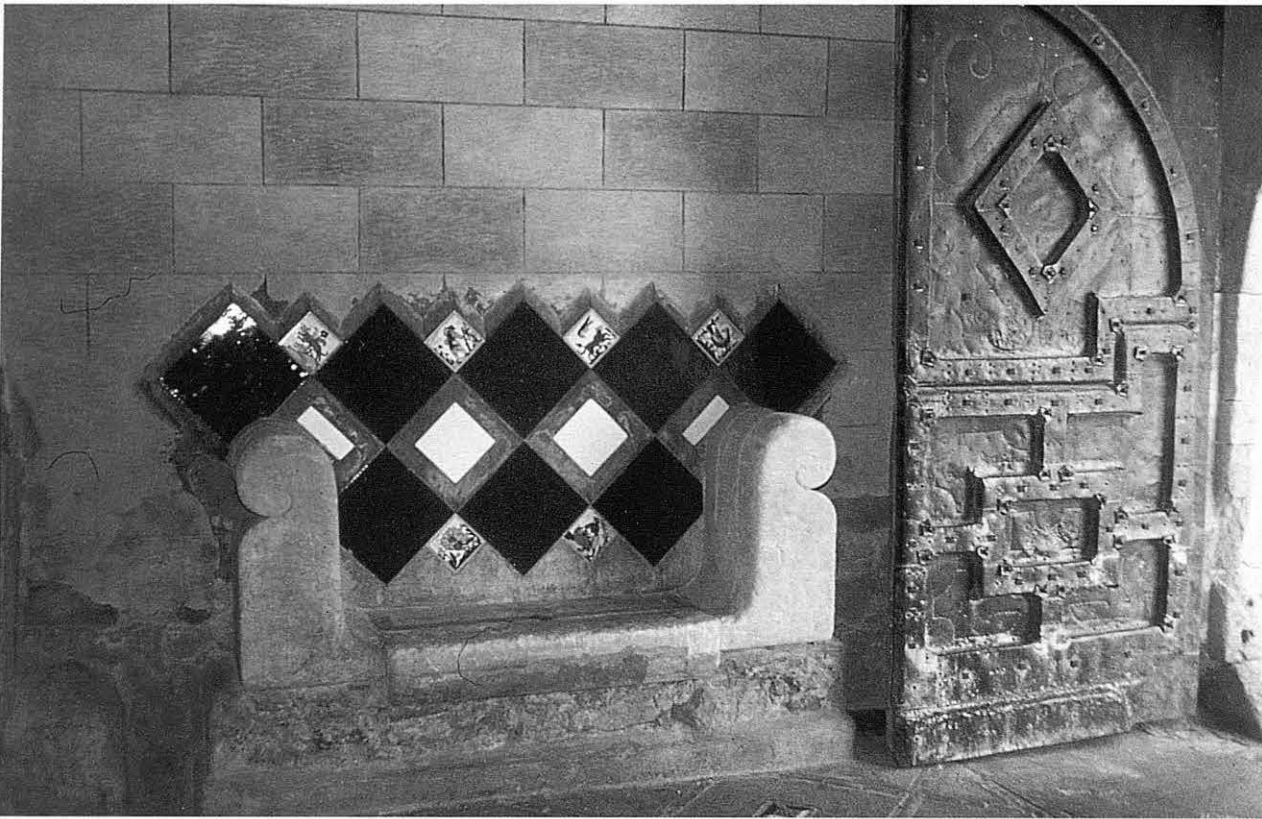


Interior of the hall —former cart entrance— a built-in item with its own roof contains the toilets.



Ground plan and section of the building: Jujol's interventions indicated in blue.





Bench in the hall and detail of the entrance door. View of the dining-room. A niche contains the famous water pitcher designed by Jujol.  
Reworking of plans: Jordi Duatis, Montserrat Torras. Photographs: Català Roca, Pedro Pablo Vaquer, Jordi Duatis



## **C**a l'Andreu and Els Pallaresos

"I believe that what must be asked, regarding any ornament, is simply this: was it made with pleasure?"

J. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849

Jujol's work in Els Pallaresos has a special interest by virtue of the way in which it is the perfect synthesis of his professional attitude transferred directly to the work: an attitude full of enthusiasm and individualism, based on personal work to counteract the financial limits characteristic of modest commissions. There can be no doubt that these limits were no obstacle in the way of his architecture; on the contrary, it could be said that they brought him closer to his world of craftsmanship, which gave him greater liberty with which to develop his sometimes almost dream-like vision. In this way his projects did not end on the drawing board; rather, the proximity of the architect to the work itself acquired special importance and he would often intervene with his bare hands, drawing sgraffiti or collecting waste objects that would form part of grilles, doors, roofs or any element of the construction liable to be re-invented by the architect.

The two houses in this village on which he did notable work (Casa Bofarull and Casa Fortuny) have one thing in common, the so-called construction by *marees* (tides) imposed by the clients; that is, depending on the quality of the harvest each year, it was decided how much work could be done. The architect, who had practically become a member of the family due to the fact that the works lasted almost twenty years, and even then they were not finished, replied by working on individual details, convinced that

the only way to work was to work well, irrespective of the magnitude of the reforms to be carried out, and knowing that "an unfinished work is much better than a badly finished work."<sup>(1)</sup>

In the case of Casa Fortuny, also known as Ca l'Andreu, only a small part of the proposed reforms were ever finished: cellar and presses (1927 and reforms to the entrance, dining-room, façade windows, staircase and upstairs openings as from 1927. The most interesting of his interventions are those on the ground floor, especially the curious visual relationship introduced between the main hall and the dining room, the latter half-raised and both areas joined by means of a large "furniture-window". Notable also in the hall is the access area, where he dignified the old door with a finely worked copper facing, while the threshold is enhanced by a cross of St Andrew in ceramic cut into the flagstone flooring, as well as a bench also of stone and ceramic. His intervention in the hall is completed by the renovation of a set of old washbasins covered with their vault, made independent within the large inner space like washbasins in the Manyach factory.

Jujol's work on the Casa Bofarull was much more radical, and the most important part was carried out in 1917, based on the preliminary project of three years earlier. During succeeding years the house continued to undergo transformations until in 1931 the project for the only partially built main façade was carried out. The first interventions were the most important and contributed to organise the house, potentiating the relationship, through different areas of light, between the access door, hall, central room, porch, garden (with the fountain and the triangular opening of the wall situated on this visual axis), and even the landscape of Tarragona beyond. The element that contributes most to

this series of transparent areas is the single unfaced arch with a span of 10 metres, which converts the former porch into a decidedly open space. On the first floor, just above the porch, a generously proportioned gallery (16 × 2.5 mts) was built of unfaced brick forming geometrical patterns, resting on slender reinforced concrete columns. Behind the façade columns it is possible to see the intense, luminous blue —Jujol blue for many of us— of the inner walls of the gallery.

If Jujol's interventions establish a dialogue with the building to the extent that even the non-reformed parts become incorporated into the new construction, on the other hand some of his contributions can be considered pre-existing events —contraptions— which already formed part of the world but which are nevertheless still unexpected and surprising. This is the case of the unusual objects that appear in his architecture, but also of that neo-Mudejar portico or the arch of the back façade since their timeless quality suggests that they may have been found by the architect-archaeologist beneath the thick coat of stucco that covers the façade.

The tower is undoubtedly the most surprising element of the Casa Bofarull. Situated at the façade looking towards the village, it is in direct competition with the church belfry and the watchful angel at the top keeps guard over the fields. It could also symbolise the return to hearth and home after a hard day's work in the fields, almost like a terrestrial lighthouse. Seen from inside, the tower is nothing more than the prolongation of the old staircase situated tangentially to the succession of access areas. The first section of staircase, one of the most interesting parts of the project, is outstanding by virtue of the treatment of the bannister with metallic bars worked as if they were made of rope, knotted at the ends, surprised and statically fixed

moments before having found their stable equilibrium. The magic atmosphere is finally enhanced by the "Jujol blue" on the walls. These, hardly lit lower down, are brightly illuminated at the top of the tower, by means of windows and the hexagonal eye in the first belvedere. Through this hexagon, which due to an optical illusion from below seems to "revolve", it is possible to glimpse the also hexagonal skylight on the second level of the tower.

Especially surprising is the incorporation of a *porró* (a long-spouted glass vessel from which wine is drunk) in the side of the pinnacle. The design of the railing is also very interesting; it is formed from slim interlacing metallic bars which at opposite ends become supports for ritual pyres. If by day the railings seen from a distance act as the aura or cloud on which the angel stands, by night it is the pyres that create the magic, mysterious atmosphere of the apparition.

In contrast to the carefree and somewhat whimsical appearance of the Casa Bofarull, the volumetric composition of the tower in general, and its plan in particular, reveal a notable effort to produce a rational composition. One need only observe how the geometry of the tower floors is juxtaposed with other hexagonal or octagonal geometries, arranged around the vertical axis, and which are used to order skylights, the basis of the roof, pinnacle and even the windows and benches in the corners. This effort at synthesis between rationalisation and subjectivity is present also in the decoration. Thus the iron works are occasionally characterised by linear forms — simple lines which summarise the architect's passion—, and on other occasions by complex forms inspired by nature, framed by clearly geometrical figures.

In these works, Jujol's almost Ruskinian view of design, understood as pleasure, crafts-

manship, based on the particular, means that it would be pointless to attempt to reproduce his work on other buildings, since his "found" objects form part of the building itself and of its surroundings. His unusual creations based on heterogeneous materials, disused objects, can be understood in the same sense as when he transformed smudges of ink into decorative motifs or even the design itself.<sup>(2)</sup> Thus, when he uses concrete materials, these form part of the project while continuing to be tools, stones, plates, cups, or even a *porró* on the roof of the Bofarull tower. These unmanipulated objects want constantly to remind as of their origin and to this end they demand the complicity of the observer in order to transform them into meaning, in this way becoming possibly even strangely ambiguous and hermetic for those who would attempt to decipher them, yet clear and unambiguous for those who let themselves be captured by their architecture.

Jujol tackled these works conscious of the intensely rural environment in which he was working, voluntarily cutting himself off from the cultural-artistic currents of the moment. In this way, acting fully on the fringe, he extracted maximum benefit from the few resources at his disposal in order to achieve a final result in perfect balance between traditional construction and architecture as an artistic option. His works, despite all the demands and concrete needs characteristic of the nature of the commissions, are evidence of the efforts of the architect to imprint on their form certain beautiful, venerable characters, although from other viewpoints they may be considered useless.<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) RUSKIN, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

(2) Eye-witness accounts collected in the book, *La arquitectura de J. M.º Jujol*, published by the Col·legi d'Arquitectura de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1974.

(3) J. RUSKIN, *op. cit.*