

the fountain of Plaza España: competition report

«The theory of the form of the monument is the equilateral triangle, that is, its base is triangular, thus offering fronts and vertices to the main thoroughfares that converge in and cross the large square from a number of different angles.

The centre of the monument is a point of intersection of the wide avenues Cortes Catalanas, Avenida de America and Paralelo (this last with a deviation of 50 centimetres).

The arrangement of elements is as follows: a large central monument at the foot of which there are three satellite monuments, each one housing public fountains in the vertices cut from the large curved triangle of concave stylobates. The small monuments are centred on the side passages of the Calle Gran Vía de las Cortes Catalanas while the central one presides the middle of the same street.

The monumental complex of the fountain stands in a circumference of forty metres diameter and the surrounding pavement is a ringed crown whose outer diameter measures seventy metres.

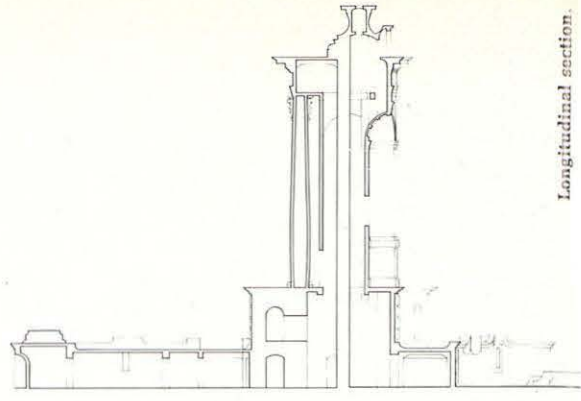
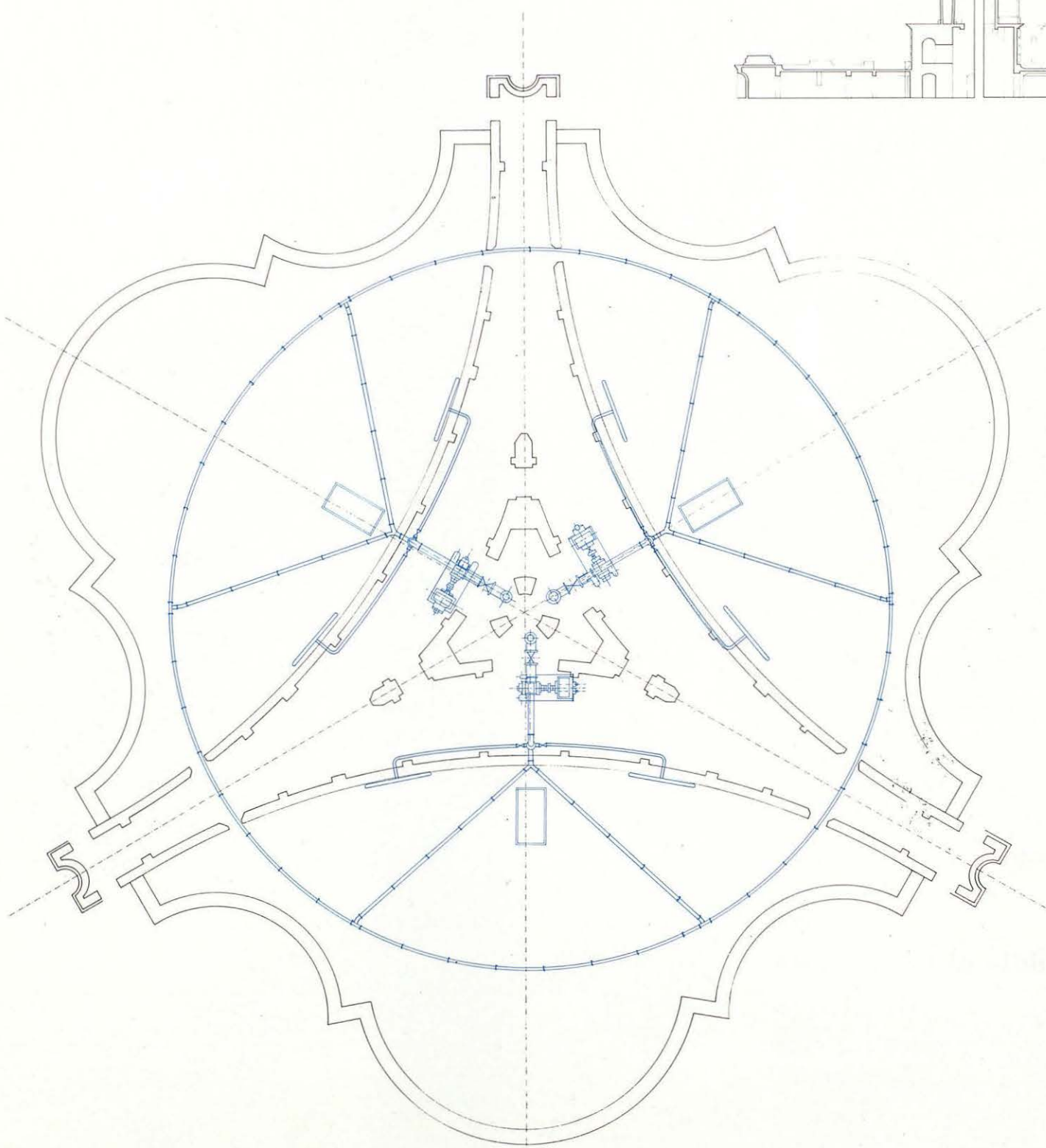
The central body, whose weight will be one thousand tons, rests on a large reinforced base which, like an immense girder, lets it hang over the Ferrocarriles Catalanes station, located exactly in the middle of the square.

On the great stylobate prepared as a large ancient wall and crowned by a powerful cornice is laid a base of rows of rustic padding that juts out considerably, with deep threads indicating the joins and crowned by a Roman cantilever cornice that forms

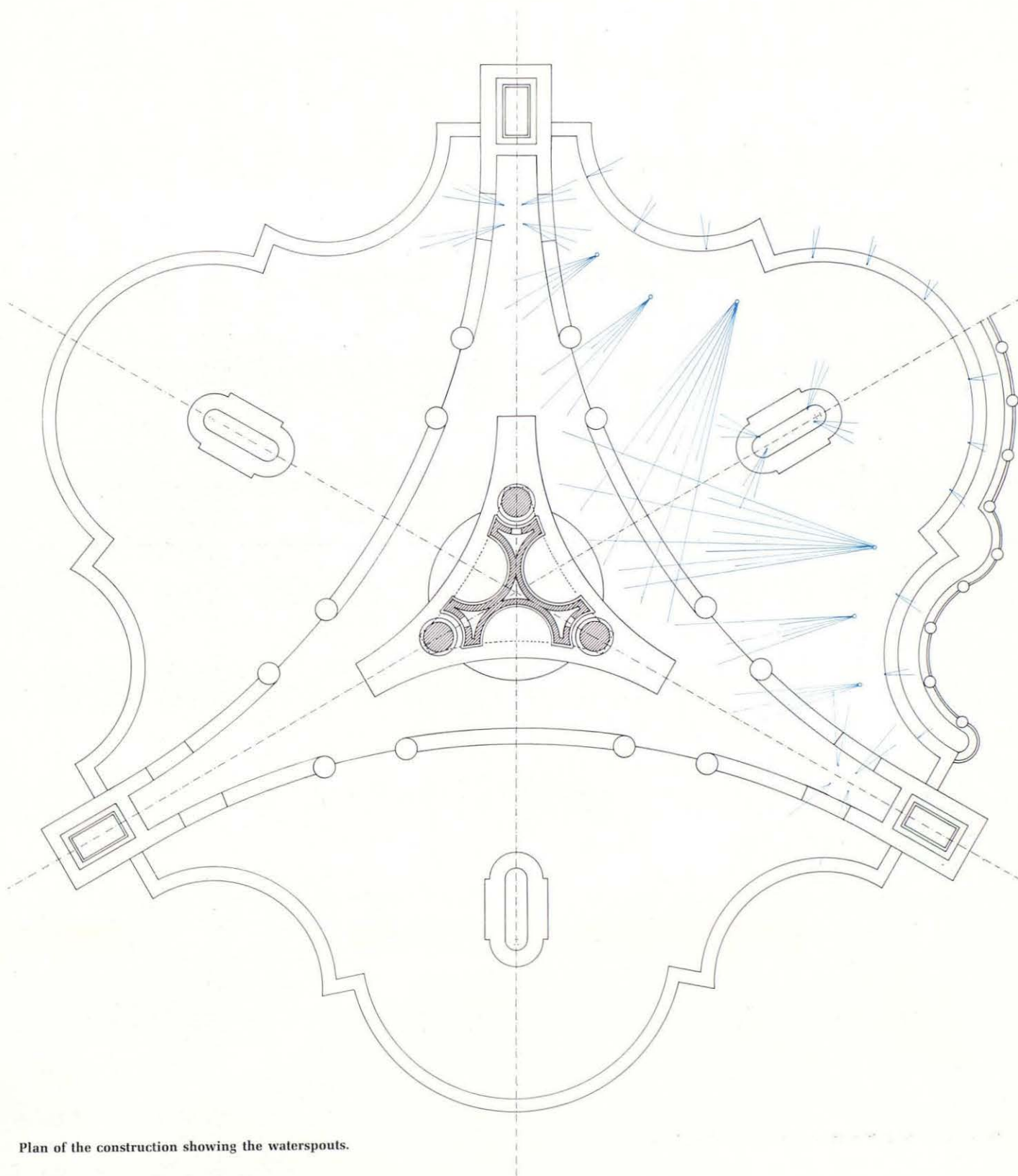
1927-29

Commemorative fountain and pavilion for the
Universal Exhibition





Plan of the construction showing the network of ducts.



Plan of the construction showing the waterspouts.

the foot of the central monument.

There are three large pools that adapt to the faces of the stylobate (...)

The monument can be entered and one can easily visit the interior, finally reaching the hollow of the pyre itself. The space inside the first base or stylobate, whose façades contain six copper doors and several windows with strong Roman-style grilles, contains the large machine room, a vast triangle with fifty-metre sides in which three powerful groups of centrifugal pumps and a two hundred and forty horsepower motor carry out the painful effort of sending to the top of the statues the water necessary to feed all the elements by means of an iron tube, seventy centimeters in diameter, placed vertically in the central axis and branching off where necessary (...)

The pavement, whose overall width, as can be deduced from what was said at the beginning of this article, is fifteen metres, consists of three areas: the main, highest, one, ten metres wide, is a circular crown to be paved with Roman mosaic with tritons and naiads on black and yellowish marble. The stretch destined for normal traffic is a two-metre belt of black basalt with brick and white marble incrustated, and is therefore very durable. The inner one, whose form is determined by the inner circumference of the crown and the broken outline of the pools is deeper and its paving of stars made from black pebbles from the beaches of Tarragona with marble centres. The whole monument is built of fine marbles, some of them polished and extracted from quarries in the provinces of Tarragona and Gerona, and volcanic rock (granite) from La Roca del Vallès and the coastal region of the province of Barcelona» (1).

On May 19 1929, the day the Exhibition

opened, the fountain was practically finished.

On St Peter's day, the water jets began to function.

(1) Extract from the project report submitted to the limited competition organised by the Builders Commission of the Universal Exhibition of 1929.





The Dress Palace in the current International Exhibition in Barcelona, situated in the block bounded by the Avenida de la Reina María Cristina, Plaza de España, Calle de las Cortes Catalanas, Calle de Méjico and the narrow plot that isolates the glass factory included in the Exhibition precinct (although not part of it) was originally intended to house Pedagogy, Hygiene and Social Institutions, an exalted, evocative and complicated calling.

The site measures some 6,000 square metres and the building cost 800,000 pesetas.

The authors of the building are the architects José María Jujol and Andrés Calzada, both lecturers at the School of Architecture, Barcelona.

To make full use of such an irregular site (a kind of very asymmetrical L with a great variety of false corners), a strong element of daring and ingenuity was needed, and the solution was found by arranging the building in two large halls equipped with exedras, the larger on both heads, the smaller half-way along the length, both in contact with another intermediate, circular hall (covered with a dome) placed between exedras which are the extension of a porched gallery running along the Plaza de España and which has a tower at either end. The roof is of wood, cylindrical over the long halls and circular over the central one, 13 metres in diameter and provided with a small dome or lantern. The building's main hall, bounded by Calle Cortes and Calle

Méjico, opens onto a fine terrace with pergolas and an exquisite Greek-bordered rosette inserted into the tiled flooring.

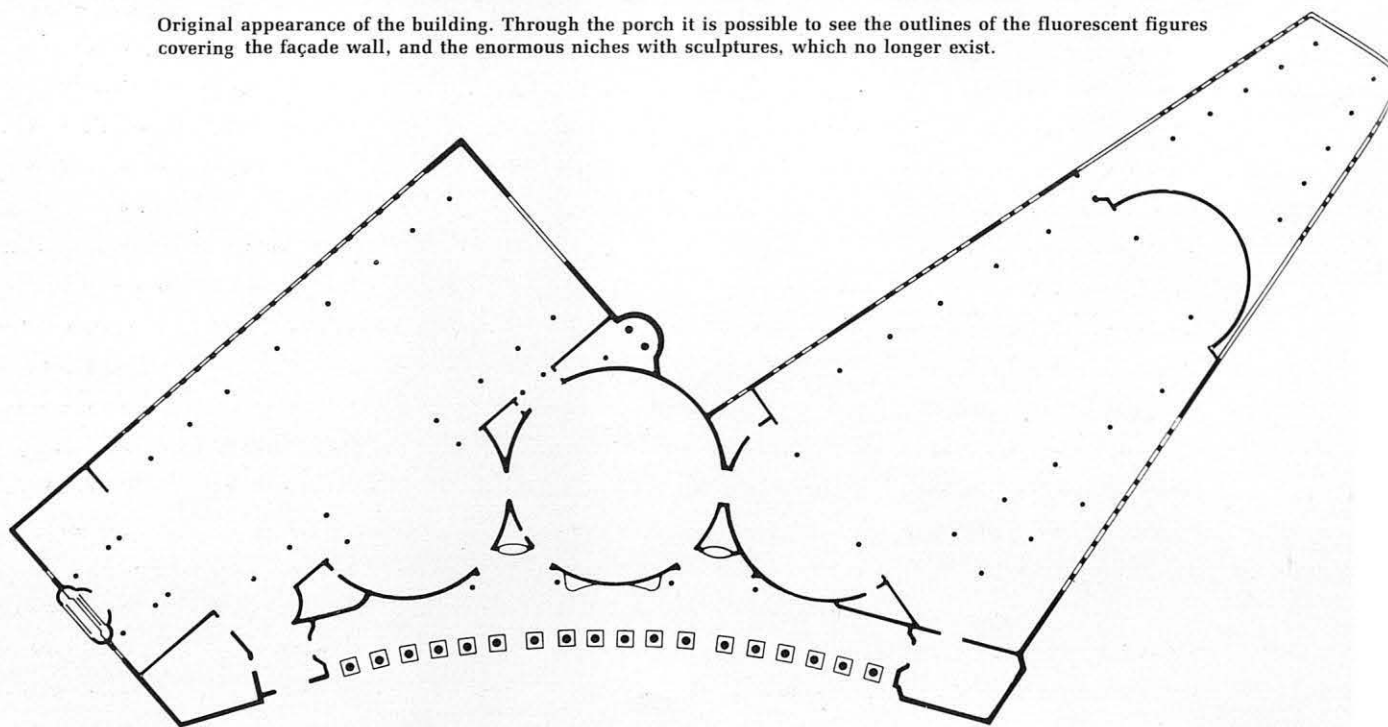
As an added obstacle to construction on this site, it slopes to the extent that one end is five metres higher than the other, which meant that the foundations had to be laid in wells with large arches, and that next to Calle Cortes Catalanas and Calle Méjico a large premises had to be built to house a customs centre and packet depot.

In this building, due to its polygon-shaped perimeter, and its long rear section (against the aforementioned plot) the amount of façade in relation to the contained surface of the building was very large, which resulted in an insufficient budget for the construction of this kind of vast wall.

The architectural expertise shown here is both ingenious and daring. The walls are hollow with crossed headers joining both faces; the roofs are wooden resting on timber arches, and this thoroughly undisguised structure is ideal for panelled decoration, painted at a greater scale than constructions of such modest means would normally allow. In the main hall (which contains the exit to the flat roof) and which originally was to be dedicated to Pedagogy, on the arch of the largest exedra, which is reminiscent of Roman basilicas, rests a medallion painted with the gentle and majestic image of the Master of Masters, Jesus Christ, who blesses with his



Original appearance of the building. Through the porch it is possible to see the outlines of the fluorescent figures covering the façade wall, and the enormous niches with sculptures, which no longer exist.



right hand while in his left he holds the Gospel open on the page in which he declares his magisterial function EGO SUM LUX NUNDI, in the way of PANTOCRATOR in the aforementioned basilicas; hand-painted mural by the undersigned.

The exedras at the porch each contain bronze statues: Pedagogy, represented by a venerable old man (San José de Calasanz, illustrious Aragonese pedagogue, founder of the Escuelas Pías), giving a reading lesson to a child, both of them dressed in fantastic Roman costume. Around his neck the child wears the BULLA AUREA (a children's attribute at the time) while his master wears the tunic and the toga reaching his ankles. The other statue, equipped with lance and shield, represents Law, the common basis of social institutions.

Along the back wall of the hypostyle portico there is a magnificent blue band in which light coloured figures move bordered by a white phosphorescent line: these are scenes related to Education, Hygiene and Social Institutions, whose epigrammatical inscriptions (which were never included) were to have been written in Greek and Latin. Because of the changes in the name of the building, the purpose of the Palace was never inscribed on the frieze that runs along the top of the columns. (First Pedagogy, Hygiene and Social Institutions, then Labour, now Dress).

The architectural style adopted was Tuscan or Roman Doric to harmonise with the adjacent building as

the two architects previously agreed.

The facing of the outer walls should have been decorated with graceful fantasies in stucco, and both towers, crowned by large, magnificent sculptural groups, corporeal representations of the coats of arms of the city (left tower) and of the nation (on the right of the observer).

The FASTIGIUM of Barcelona was formed by a circular Roman shield or CLIPEUS accompanied by the helmet and crest, the LORICA (cuirass), the lion's skin and the CLAVA, Herculean attributes that allude to a legend regarding the founding of our beloved city. That of Spain is composed of the Globe subordinated to the lion and the cross of San Andrés, meaning a fortress (Andreas in Hebrew is the equivalent of *Fortissimus* in Latin), and this was the device that the brave Spanish soldiers wore in Flanders. The devices PLUS ULTRA, NON PLUS ULTRA would have been engraved on both phylacteries coiled around the pyramidal pinnacles at the corners of the cornices on the towers, alluding to the Straits of Gibraltar, since Columbus and before his brilliant discovery.

The way our building has been impoverished by these omissions is indescribable, not to mention the absence of other elements such as beautiful large lamps on the summits of the halls and over the central dome a cruciform lamp sending off light in different directions, the calling of education and interpretation of

the aforementioned text LUX MUNDI.

The layout of the ground plan in circular arches and straights in contact with them, leaves a series of triangles (which the visitor does not notice. These house the indispensable services such as water, cloakroom (with access from the portico), electricity, access stairway to the roof, telephone, etc.

The picture decoration alternates with mouldings and capitals with vividly coloured alternate fretwork, attracting the attention to certain corners and satisfying the eye of the observer.

The effect of the portico at night is highly attractive since the abundance of lights allows one to glimpse the magnificent row of pictures, whose figures are four metres high, and the great cavities of the vaults in the corner of the exedras, each one sheltering its double door and between them, beneath a covering the two aforementioned statues, and crossing this classical and rich background the immense shadow of the columns, eleven metres high, seen against the light.

There are a number of viewpoints from which the effect produced by the palace is greatest. One of these is in the Calle de Cortes where it crosses Castillejos: the imposing mass of the several bodies with the dome and, in the foreground, the pergolas on the terrace, gives an idea of the grandiosity, even more of the concept than of the dimensions, of the work. From the fences at the entrance to the Exhibition, opposite the

palace, the effect of the Berninian columns can be seen (which, with all due respect, have certain reminiscences of the world-famous and unequalled St Peter's Square in Rome). Similarly, the oblique view of the whole, from the Avenida de la Reina María Cristina, with the side door and angular tower of Barcelona in the foreground and the columns whose concave curvature is foreshortened, opening out towards the Spain tower and, in the distance, the parallel circumferences of the entablatures converge in contrast with the vertical profiles of the column shafts.

The ingenious ground plan of the building has been praised by the Technical Authorities of the Exhibition in an official communication which says, *"The ground plan is admirably resolved."*

This building, like so many built for the exhibition, is provisional, that is, it is due for demolition when the City Council so requires. Nevertheless, if the roof is properly maintained, it could last indefinitely. The Palace in question is suitable for conferences, small fine arts or monographical exhibitions, festivals, etc., by virtue both of ease of access from Plaza de España and its inner division into rooms of relatively moderate capacity.

Finally, this is the second of two projects, the first of which was essentially similar, though more sumptuous and acutely original.» (1)

(1) Extract from the original report written by J. M.^a Jujol and published in «EL IMAN», No. 82, Barcelona, 1929.