



Casa Convalescència
UAB

History

The Casa de Convalescència, one of the last great works of Catalan Modernism, forms part of the complex of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau. The complex was designed in the late 19th century to alleviate the shortage of hospital space in Barcelona. The hospital of Santa Creu, dating from 1401 and situated in the old city centre (Casc Antic) had become obsolete due the city's growth and breakthroughs in medicine.



The construction of the Casa was supervised by Pere Domènech i Roura. Initially he worked with his father, Lluís Domènech i Montaner, and then took over as supervisor after the latter's death in 1923.

The building, which was used for convalescent patients, with a maximum capacity for 100 residents, featured stunning glazed solariums and a chapel, which split the building into two wings, one for men and one for women. The Casa was independent of the Hospital, having its own kitchen and pharmacy, as well as its own financial management.

The project was funded with the proceeds from the sale of the former Casa de Convalescència in carrer del Carme, which brought in 1,750,000 pesetas.

In 1930, on the occasion of the visit by King Alphonse XIII to open the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, the Casa de Convalescència was opened.

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona was granted use of the building in 1969 to develop different academic activities and to consolidate the university's presence in the city.

The renovation and refurbishing of the Casa, undertaken in 1998, and managed by the Tusquets-Díaz & Associats firm of architects, constituted an ambitious project to restore it to its original form, and was completed in October 1999, when it was officially reopened.

The whole hospital complex, including the Casa, was declared Historical Artistic Monument in 1978 and World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997.

UAB-Casa Convalescència is currently the headquarters of the Foundation of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (FUAB).



The Building

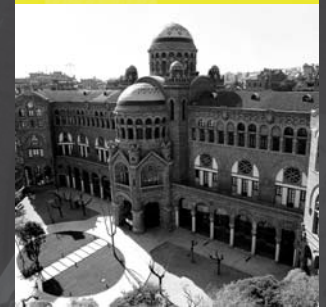
The Casa is a unique building rich in modernist elements. It has a surface area of 6,245 m² distributed over four floors and a basement. In structural terms it maintains the Catalan modernist tradition of ceilings comprised of brick vaults and metal girders that tense the flattened arches, made of bare-brickwork rowlock arches.

The monumental entrance leads into the vestibule, where the columns and capitals are made of natural stone, the arches and walls of bare brickwork and the banisters, parapets and balustrades are made of artificial stone. There are four murals with polychromed tiles that tell the story of the families that donated funds to build the old Casa in carrer del Carme: the coats of arms of the Gualba, Astor and Soler and Ferran families. The latter, expressed through a motif of a six-nailed horseshoe, is repeated on the floor tiles of the building in memory of the main benefactor of the first Casa de Convalescència.

On the ground floor, all the rooms are decorated with banisters of majolicas, and tiled soffits are also conserved. These were manufactured in factories in Esplugues and Manises and depict the legends of the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity and other religious allusions.

The stairs that lead to the upper floors are made of marble or calcareous stone.

The former chapel, now the Aula Magna, has a markedly vertical proportion with a large dome in the centre sustained by shells, bare-brick rowlock arches and polished stone columns. The original high altar boasted an extraordinary altarpiece representing Saint George. It was made of Baroque-like sculpted alabaster, with spiralling columns and a multitude of decorative embossed work.





Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1850-1923) was in charge of the project which made the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau the most relevant public building of Catalan modernism. This is the most ambitious work of an architect who has designed such striking buildings as the Palau de la Música Catalana, Casa Lleó i Morera, Fonda Espanya, Casa Fuster, Casa Navàs and Casa Thomas, among others.

His son Pere Domènech i Roura (1881-1962) designed the façade of the Olympic Stadium at Montjuïc, the Casa de la Premsa (Press Hall) for the World Fair of 1929 and the Cooperatives Agrícoles (agricultural cooperative) at l'Espluga de Francolí and Serral.



Lluís Domènech i Montaner



Pere Domènech i Roura

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