

Images

01. Portico of the Gothic Palace of the Alcázar of Seville, towards the courtyard of Lady María de Padilla or the Courtyard of the Cruise. Photograph by Carlos Plaza (2022).

02. Courtyard of the Casa Lonja of Seville. Photograph by Carlos Plaza (2013).

03. José Ortiz y Sanz, *Los Diez Libros de Arquitectura de M. Vitruvio Polión, 1787*. Cover and Plate L (Ground floor of the Greek house). Library of the University of Seville, Antique collection, A065/112.

04. Antoine Desgodets, *Les edifices Antiques de Rome, 1682*. Frontispiece and plate of the Temple of Peace (Basilica of Maxentius). Library of the Institut National d'Histoire de l'art, FOL RES 633.

05. Sebastian van der Borcht, *Plano de los Reales Alcázares de Sevilla con sus jardines y sus posadas accesorias*, drawing on paper, 1759. General Archive of the Palace, (Madrid), plan no. 4581.

06. Gothic Palace of the Alcázar of Seville, portico gallery (left) and Vault Room (right). Photographs by Carlos Plaza (2022).

07. Antonio Ponz, *Viage de España, en que se da noticia de las cosas más apreciables y dignas de saberse, que hay en ella, tomo XVII (trata de Andalucía)*, Imp. viuda de Ibarra, Madrid, 1792, p. 222, Fragment[s] of an antique sculpture. Biblioteca Nacional de España, BA/725-BA/742 (Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, PID: bdh0000154545).

08. Fragments of toga wearers from the public collection of Bruna in the Gothic Palace, currently in the English garden of the Alcázar. Photographs by Carlos Plaza (2022).

09. Francisco Pardo, *Fauno del Cabrito* (Faun with kid), drawing, black pencil on laid paper, 435x27 mm, 1773. Collection of the University of Seville, Faculty of Fine Arts, catalogue number 0163-01-DEC-DIB.

10. Corinthian capital, cast in plaster, 305x350x350 mm. Collection of the University of Seville, catalogue number 1158-12-EECC-ESC.

04 Mitjans as a Reference of Mitjans Félix Solaguren-Beascoa de Corral

In his prolific professional career, Mitjans used study and reference as his main design tools. When he designed Barcelona's football stadium, Camp Nou, he travelled all around Europe visiting other stadiums and gathered documents and postcards of them.

In 1968, he participated in the competition for the new Telefónica headquarters in Fuentelarreina (Madrid), and had El Escorial, Mies or Harrison on his drawing board. In the definitive version of the Atlántico building at the junction between Calle Balmes and Avenida Diagonal de Barcelona, his gaze turned to Gio Ponti.

However, in his first works on dwellings, also in Barcelona, his referent was Raimon Duran i Reynals, who followed the aesthetics of US architect Charles Platt for the composition of façades. Thus, in 1944, next to Turó Park in Barcelona, Mitjans created a work in brick and artificial stone, with a flat façade and two dwellings per landing. Sometime later, he would design another building on an adjacent plot with a different dwelling typology. However, the façade was similar and provided a united, unique canvas that would help to give a uniform character to the green space of the urban park, Turó Park.



In 1935, Raimon Duran i Reynals simultaneously carried out two designs for two chamfered corners of the same block of the Ensanche area of Barcelona. These were the corners of Calle Lauria with Calle Rosellón, and that of Calle Lauria with Calle Córcega: the houses Cardenal and Espona respectively (figs. 02, 03). The two plots have similar dimensions, but the orientation of the first is to the west while that of the second is to the south.

The chamfered corner is one of the main characteristics of the Ensanche area. This distinctive feature tightens the geometric fitting of any design, particularly building programmes for domestic

use whose distribution requires small rooms in which this alteration in the orthogonality of the area can be noted significantly.

If we compare the standard plans of the two designs we can find some similar mechanisms in how the fitting of this geometric challenge is resolved (figs. 04, 05). Casa Espona has two entrances and building typologies of one and two dwellings per landing. Casa Cardenal has only one entrance hall and has three dwellings per floor. The position of the entrances to the flats and the orthogonal rooms follow a similar compositional fit. The tension between the floors and the polygonal plots is apparent in the interior courtyards whose geometry takes on the various directrices and makes them essential wildcard elements that produce a natural, even relaxed result. In some way, they become sacrificial elements. The architectural programme for the dwellings, the structural typology and the load-bearing walls are identical in both cases, but the style of the façades is different. While the image of Casa Cardenal is associated with modern pragmatism, Casa Espona draws on the style of the New York work of Charles Platt¹ (fig. 06). The first building could be integrated into a trend close to the modernity proposed by GATCPAC, but the second example would be closer to a simple, starched classicism of flat façades of brick and artificial stone that reinterpreted what was known as an English style². However, what is interesting in both designs is that the two façades could be interchanged as, despite their different formality, the overall development of the design came under the umbrella of a function that was ultimately the same.

Durán's command of the use of different styles enabled him to carry out such contrasting works as the Casa Espona³ in pure GATCPAC style and, just after the Civil War, complete the Church of Santa María Reina⁴ in Pedralbes. This church had been started by Nicolau Maria Rubió i Tudurí and had a clear Brunelleschian influence. Rubió faithfully reflected the Noucentista concerns of the period. He completed his studies in 1916 in a period in which the Barcelona School of Architecture was directed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

Durán finished his studies in 1926. At this time, despite the fundamental weight of Modernism and Noucentisme, rationalist echoes began to be noted in the environment that influenced the young architect at the start of the 1930s, when he was already a GATCPAC member. On 27 April 1927, at 17 years old, Francisco Mitjans applied to enrol in the subjects of ornamentation and figure to enter the School of Architecture. A few years later, he was a member-student of GATCPAC. During this period, he carried out some reforms in a style that we could define as classical, although in parallel, in 1934 and 1935, he constructed Casa Casabó in Sitges or designed what are known as houses "A" and "B" in the new style.

However, the main bulk of Francisco Mitjans's work was in the area of multifamily housing. In his first significant commission, Casa Oller (1941), he demonstrated great ability in layout and composition. He established his habitual residence in this building.⁵ The main model in this design was the long dwelling that is typical of the Ensanche. However, Mitjans reinterpreted this by reducing the building depth and turning it around by transforming the gallery of the inner courtyard into a broad continuous balcony that would be the façade facing the street and that could be considered a fifth corridor.

Very close to this first work, in 1944, Francisco Mitjans received a commission to design dwellings for one of the streets surrounding Turó Park⁶ in Barcelona. The designs were for two adjacent plots with identical dimensions, numbers 7 and 9, on Calle Maestro Pérez Cabrero street whose façade faces the west side of the park. The park, with a triangular ground plan, is surrounded by apartment blocks that were constructed mainly in the 1940s and 1950s. This resulted in a series of elevations with connotations that are fundamentally classical. The general characteristics of these designs is that they are comprised of luxury floors with generous surface areas, and generally one or two dwellings per floor.

Calle Maestro Pérez Cabrero is the street on the west side that runs from west to east. It has a slight slope that is sufficient to differentiate the buildability of the various plots, with a volumetric definition of stepped constructions with party walls. However, Mitjans used a resource that he repeated throughout his professional career, even in designs for adjacent plots: the maintenance of one volume, even if the buildings were commissioned by different clients or had different programmes.

The first commission was for Salvio Iborra. Mitjans repeated the same design in the two plots to achieve a result with a much more majestic presence than if the buildings had been created in a different way. Unlike the typology that was prevalent around the park, the definition of these two designs was that of four dwellings per landing (fig. 07). However, the composition of the façades hid this condition. To reinforce this characteristic, Mitjans opted for a single canvas divided into three parts (fig. 08). The basement was comprised of artificial stone that encompassed the entrance, the shop units, and two floors of dwellings. The intermediate body had five floors of dwellings, the last of which was decorated below by a subtle moulding of artificial stone with a marked upper line created by a continuous balcony running along the entire façade. Finally, the building was crowned by a sixth floor with the layout of some balcony openings and an upper moulding of artificial stone that completed the entire composition. All these horizontal lines were independent from the slope of the street, which tightened the result in a topography that demanded to be recognised.

The entrance to each of these two buildings is independent and situated in the centre of the façade, leaving the sides for two shop units and the passage for the supply of coal for community heating respectively (fig. 09). The lobby of the building is deep. The front part, close to the façade, has two symmetrical staircases that lead to the entresol floor (fig. 10). In the back is the caretaker's room, the entrance to two dwellings and the landing of the two lifts situated next to each other and connected to the two courtyards that provide ventilation for kitchens, interior rooms and washing lines. The entresol floor is where the building's general staircase starts. This is situated, suspended and parallel to the street in the geometric centre of the floor. After this floor, there are four dwellings per landing. Two of the dwellings are next to the façade and the other two are next to the interior of the block. This pattern is repeated on all floors except the entresol, in which the dwellings at the front have two floors and occupy the part behind the shops that are situated at street level. On the left, an alley leads to the coal bunkers and alters the symmetrical layout of the ground floor. On one side is the passage, the shop and its bathroom, a gallery and a bedroom also with a bathroom for the use of the entresol dwelling above. The area on the right has a similar layout and the same conditions as on the other side, but the remaining space is for the entrance to the porter's dwelling from the general lobby. On this level is the kitchen-living room while the bedrooms are in the basement and ventilated by the service courtyard.

The standard plan is drawn in an unusual way. It is a graphic design that Mitjans used in projects carried out during this period: half a floor was outlined and delimited. Bathrooms, kitchen and bathroom furniture were represented. On the other side, the partition walls and load-bearing walls were plotted in black and the planned uses were listed.

There was little difference between the dwellings at the front and the back of the building. However, the nuances between them reflected, in the front of the building, the compositional tension imposed by the simple façade of Turó Park, while at the back, the apartment facing the interior of the block was resolved in a more relaxed way with a balcony that enabled the relationship with the outside to be readjusted. Each dwelling had ten rooms that the architect defined⁷ and listed: an "entrance hall", three "bedrooms" (one for servants), a "bathroom", an area of "sanitary equipment", a "kitchen-scullery", a "living-dining room", a "gallery" and a "pantry" in the front

dwelling that in the back dwelling were replaced by a "terrace" and a "cupboard-pantry" associated with the "entrance hall", as the gallery appeared as another element of the kitchen.

The bedroom area, except the servants' bedroom, and the living-dining room were next to the façades and deep rooms. These three rooms were arranged along the width of the dwelling. The main bedroom (numbers 14 and 4 on the plan) had a dressing room on the outside part and a sleeping area on the inside part. The second bedroom was smaller as the toilet (number 19), pantry (number 20) and a small hall (number 18) or the servant's bedroom in the other dwelling (number 7) occupied a corridor equivalent to the sleeping area in the main bedroom. The interpretation of these two areas was emphasised in the living-dining room (numbers 2 and 12) through a generous opening in the load-bearing wall and the position of the chimney at an angle in the second corridor of the dwelling that faced the street and situated laterally in the interior part of the back dwelling.

The composition mechanisms of the layout were not linear. They were on a diagonal, as in the design in Calle Amigó, and resorted to a layout of the various elements as a cascade, to give a feeling that the space was bigger than it really was.

Mitjans believed in the cosmopolitan vocation of Barcelona. The buildings to be constructed around Turó Park were a good opportunity to reaffirm this objective, as happened in the main European cities.

At the same time as the design for Salvio Iborra, Mitjans received a commission from Soler Nogués for another apartment block on the adjacent plot, which was number 5 of the same street. However, in this case, the programme had to have two dwellings per floor instead of the four per floor in his two adjacent designs.

The width of the plot was the same as that of its neighbours. However, the building depth was slightly lower. As these were more exclusive dwellings, a greater amount of artificial stone was used on the façade. However, the continuity of the composition with the adjacent elevation marked the general lines in the use of the same materials and in the design.

The façade facing the park was again flat and subtle variations in composition were introduced on the ground floor.

On the upper floors, four pilasters were incorporated in the intermediate body and two lines of horizontal moulding that more clearly organised the division of the façade into a hierarchy of three parts (fig. 11). Although the buildings were not carried out simultaneously, this unitary value was also emphasised in their ground plans and elevations.

Mitjans referenced himself. In this way, numbers 5, 7 and 9 of this street formed one unit and had some characteristics in common: the adjustment of the lower part of the base with the slope of the street, to give continuity to the line above the base or the crown of the building that conserved the same characteristics. Mitjans used this resource in most of the designs that he created throughout his life. The final result is that of a flat façade of brick and artificial stone that also hides a great skill: it appears that the dwellings, if not identical, are at least similar.

The solution for the building at number 5 was a layout of two dwellings per landing, which forced certain important decisions about the design to be taken. The building had two entrances: one main entrance and one service entrance, with their corresponding lobbies (numbers 1 and 18). The first lobby was moved slightly to the back while the second was closer to the street.

The entranceway was lateral rather than central. However, the area for vertical communication was centred and at the back of the floor so that the stairway ventilated directly from the back of the building (fig. 12). The general floor plan was divided into three areas: to the west was the day area, in the centre was the service area and to the east, beside the façade and facing Turó Park, was the bedroom area (fig. 13). The dwelling's rooms were again numbered and defined.

There were nineteen, but the list did not number the back terrace. As a general rule, Mitjans avoided the use of corridors in his dwellings. His layouts were based on a series of connected spaces whose measurements were sufficiently generous for them not to become mere corridors. In this case, the connection between the day area and the night area was coordinated by relating the two entrances to the dwelling. In this way, between the "service entrance hall" (number 18) and the "kitchen" (number 13) was a space (number 17) that gave access to the kitchen and also connected the main hall (number 1) with the "passage" (number 16), which meant that the bathroom of the main bedroom could be reached and the "hall of bedrooms" (number 11) also connected the four bedrooms and the shared bathroom. To reinforce this desire to eliminate the corridor, these two areas - 16 and 17 - were separated by a door and their flooring was different.

Three bedrooms are next to the main façade. Their dimensions and layout are similar to those in the adjacent building, with the variation that the central room, the "living-dining room" is not as deep and becomes a bedroom (number 5) and part of the area of the chimney in the adjacent dwelling is transferred to "hall of bedrooms". The main bedroom is divided into two (numbers 6 and 7), and the dormitory is differentiated from the dressing room, which is now defined as a "boudoir". The other bedrooms were given the numbers 4, 5 and 8. Bedroom 8 was ventilated through the service courtyard. The kitchen areas was linked and brought together various spaces: "kitchen" (13), "scullery" (14), "servants' room" (11), "servants' bathroom" (12) and "covered gallery and laundry room" (19). They were connected with the day area through a door in the scullery that led to the "dining room" (3). This back part of the dwelling faced west. Finally, in one joined space the dining room and living room were grouped (numbers 3 and 2). This continuous space was nuanced by a frame of 1.90 m between the two areas, whose condition was highlighted by the chimney at an angle in the interior area, the irregular façade and the access to the terrace.

In 1950, Mitjans received a commission from Construcciones Monitor S.A. to carry out a set of dwellings on two adjacent plots, situated at numbers 2 and 4 of Calle Mandri of Barcelona. Later, a third apartment block was added, number 6, for Conrado Sastre. The plots shared party walls, although the last one, as it was on the corner of the Calle San Mario, had two façades on the street and a slightly lower building depth. The width of each one of the three buildings was 14.30 metres (figs. 14, 15). Structurally, each building was resolved by means of five spaces between load-bearing walls parallel to the street and three longitudinal spaces, two that were the party walls at the sides and their perpendicular connectors that comprised the ventilation courtyards, the staircase and the lifts, and the separation between dwellings (16). In the first space between load-bearing walls was the day zone. In the second and third, was the area for services and vertical communications, and in the fourth and fifth the night area with the bedrooms.

The standard plan was for two dwellings per landing with the same programme: four bedrooms, bathroom and toilet, kitchen-scullery, dining room-living room and terrace. The orthogonal distribution of the two first buildings was altered by two gestures: the oblique enclosure of the living room with respect to the terrace, and the slight inclination of the wall that connects the kitchen and the living room. The last dwelling type in the third plot had slightly different layout as the architect took advantage of the exterior lighting (17). Mitjans addressed the design as one unit and highlighted this condition by keeping continuous the line above the ground floor, the floor slabs and the line of the crown of the set of buildings, rounded off by some monumental chimneys. This unity was emphasised by the fact that all of the terraces were grouped together in one body decorated with a band and overhanging the plane of the façade (figs. 18, 19). Understanding this condition as a unit meant that years later two apartments in adjacent buildings could be joined by two simple perforations in the party wall.

Another of the key ideas of the architect in all of his works was the well thought-out connection of the building with the ground and the protocol for accessing the building. He always tried to set back the plane of the entrance with respect to the elevation. This gap introduced a marked shadow in the base that highlighted this upper body.

The difference in level between the two ends of the intervention is approximately 2.20 metres, an incline defined by the slope of Calle Mandri.

As stated previously, each building had two dwellings per landing. This fact was also reflected in the façade, with the presence of the wall separations between them evident throughout the height of the building, but always within the overhanging body of the terraces. This rhythm was altered in the porter's lodge of number 6 as the dividing wall between the two dwellings of the staircase was reduced to a mere glass partition that perhaps presaged the variations that would be carried out due to the corner with Calle San Mario.

The ground floor contained the access to the porter's lodges and the independent garages in each of the buildings 2 and 4. The building at number 6 did not have parking inside.

The rhythm established in these ground floors of the first two buildings is that of garage-porter's lodge-porter's lodge-garage. In the third building, this relationship is altered through the sequence dwelling-porter's lodge-commercial premises that also had an access from Calle San Mario.

Notably, in the first two buildings, in which the lobbies were grouped using an empty introductory space like a small, covered square, the access was magnified. The space that was generated is linked to the street and resolved with an organic design emphasised with plant decoration. Staircases and sinusoidal paths are outlined that lead to storage rooms or porter's lodges, separating the entrances to the garages on the sides (figs. 20, 21).

While the entrance to buildings 2 and 4 was set back, that of number 6 was aligned with the street. In the first case, vegetation accompanied the access protocol. In the second case, a plane of vertical ivy was created that covered the entire wall section (fig. 22).

The overall result of the three buildings is a unitary whole apparently with one entrance moved to the right of the elevation and a neutral, green plane that camouflages the third entrance to the left. On this base, is the overhanging unitary body of the decorated terraces crowned by three monumental chimneys.

This elegant development sparked the interest of the owner of the four neighbouring plots in Calle Mandri, situated between Calle San Mario and Calle Arimón. The developer visited Mitjans on several occasions to commission a design of the same type of dwelling and copy it in the four buildings. Francisco Mitjans turned down the work as he was designing several commissions that meant he could not undertake this project effectively. However, the owner was so insistent that in the end the architect gave him a copy of his design but refused to undertake the new set of buildings.

The resulting design used the same dwelling typology and has a similar appearance. However, when it is analysed in greater depth, it can be seen that it was a poor copy of the original (fig. 23). The first clear detail is the adaptation to the slope of the street. In this case, with plots that had similar dimensions to those described above, the difference in level of the lower corner and the upper corner with Calle Mandri was just under three metres. Maintaining Mitjans's criteria with continuous compositional lines would require giving up a significant built area.

The new design stepped the floor slabs by building. This blurred the initial division into three and the strong intermediate body that encompassed the terraces. The result was a vague ensemble that lost the basic vigour as it was the sum of identical parts that were arranged one next to the other in a staggered way. In Mitjan's proposal, the interest of the overhanging body of the terraces was

reaffirmed in the façade of Calle San Mario: an envelope of exposed brick punctuated by a series of windows decorated with artificial stone, where the brick was used as a plane and not as a volume. In the corner with Mandri, this quality is revealed when a sliding plane appears behind that is the side of the overhanging body of the terraces. In contrast, in the similar neighbouring development at the other side of Calle San Mario, this plastic solution was not repeated. The last balcony turned towards the inside of the street, which definitively distorted the powerful aesthetics proposed by Mitjans (fig. 24).

Another important aspect is the reinterpretation of the connection with the ground. If the reference design compositionally shifts the entrance to the ensemble to the lower part of the street, the new design interprets it as a sequence of four identical situations by repeating systematically the layout of garage-porter's lodge throughout the entire section. In addition to the entrances incorporating the presence of plants to give depth, they slightly overhang the street with a simple perpendicular ramp and have irregular stone paving. However, as the porter's lodges are flanked by the white doors of the garages, that of the same and the adjacent building, Mitjan's resource is not repeated and the ensemble renounces its magic for the sake of greater profitability.

In few cases does the same architect, like Mitjans, continue to think of systematically conserving a series of characteristics throughout their professional career. This is done not so much to reaffirm his figure but to insist on a model of the modern city designed for people, both for the inhabitants of its buildings and for the rest of the citizens. "Isn't that pleasant?" Mitjans would say repeatedly in the few interviews that he carried out during his life.

Félix Solaguren-Beascoa de Corral

Architect (1980), full professor of Architectural Design at the Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña, UPC (2004) and holder of a PhD in Architecture since 1986, Félix Solaguren-Beascoa has been attached to the Barcelona School of Architecture (ETSAB) since the 1970s, when he started his architecture studies. He has been a university school associate professor at ETSAB since 1992 and director of the Department of Architectural Design of the University (2004-2006). He has been a member of various bodies that assess university teaching staff. He has been director of ETSAB since 2017.

As a researcher, he is responsible for the research group FORM+ and the Architectural Design Documentation Centre of Catalonia (CDPAC), both of the UPC, and in the past he coordinated the doctoral programme in Architectural Design.

Recognised specialist in the work of Danish architect Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971), his research has focused on the area of architectural design, which has led him to teach and give talks internationally and to publish books and articles on architecture and on travel and research. In addition, he has directed several doctoral theses, many focused on Nordic architecture and he has carried out works, publications and talks in Spain, Italy, Holland, Denmark, China, the United States, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Australia.

Currently, he is writing a monography on the work of Francesc Mitjans. His professional activity can be followed at: www.nsarquitectes.com.

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Notes

01. Image from the book by CORTISSOZ, Royal, *Monograph of the work of Charles A. Platt*, The Architectural Book Publishing Co., New York, 1913.

02. For more information, see the article: BOHIGAS, Oriol, "Otra vez la arquitectura de los años 40: gracias y desgracias de los lenguajes clásicos en Barcelona", *Arquitecturas Bis*, nº 30-31 (sept.-dic. 1979), pp. 2-25.

03. Apartment block, constructed between 1932 and 1935 in issue 568 of Calle Muntaner de Barcelona.

04. Av. Esplugues 103, Barcelona.

05. SOLAGUREN-BEASCOA, Félix, "De la vivienda del ensanche a la 'casa' de Mitjans", *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, vol. 14, 2012, disponible online en: <https://revistas.unav.edu/index.php/revista-de-arquitectura/article/view/1913>.

06. Work created in 1934 by Nicolau Rubió i Tudurí, architect. Rubió was director of the Parks and Gardens Service of Barcelona City Council until 1937, when he was exiled in France. He returned in 1946.

07. Notes drawn on the plans defining each room.

Images

01. Francesc Mitjans, Dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, numbers 5, 7 and 9, Barcelona, 1944. Photograph by Juan Pablo Mitjans.

02. Ramon Duran i Reynals, exterior of Casa Cardenal, Barcelona, 1935. Photograph by the author.

03. Ramon Duran i Reynals, exterior of Casa Espona, Barcelona, 1935. Photograph by the author.

04. Ramon Duran i Reynals, ground plan of Casa Cardenal, Barcelona, 1935.

05. Ramon Duran i Reynals, ground plan of Casa Espona, Barcelona, 1935.

06. Charles Platt, 47-49 East 65 Street, New York, 1908.

07. Francesc Mitjans, standard plan of the dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, numbers 7 and 9, Barcelona, 1944.

08. Francesc Mitjans, main façade of the dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, numbers 7 and 9, Barcelona, 1944.

09. Francesc Mitjans, ground floor of the dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, numbers 7 and 9, Barcelona, 1944.

10. Francesc Mitjans, entresol floor of the dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, numbers 7 and 9, Barcelona, 1944.

11, 12. Francesc Mitjans, main façade of the dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, number 5, Barcelona, 1948.

13. Francesc Mitjans, ground floor of dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, number 5, Barcelona, 1948.

14. Francesc Mitjans, standard plan of dwellings in Calle Pérez Cabrero, number 5, Barcelona, 1948.

15. Francesc Mitjans, dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2, 4 and 6, 1954. Photograph by the author.

16. Francesc Mitjans, location of the dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2, 4 and 6, Barcelona, 1954.

17. Francesc Mitjans, standard plan of dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2 and 4, Barcelona, 1954.

18. Francesc Mitjans, standard plan of dwellings in Calle Mandri, number 6, Barcelona, 1954.

19. Francesc Mitjans, dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2, 4 and 6, Barcelona, 1954. Photograph by the author.

20. Francesc Mitjans, main elevation of the dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2, 4 and 6, Barcelona, 1954.

21. Francesc Mitjans, entrance to the dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2 and 4, Barcelona, 1954.

22. Francesc Mitjans, entrance to the dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 2 and 4, Barcelona, 1954.

23. Francesc Mitjans, entrance to the dwellings in Calle Mandri, number 6. Photograph by the author.

24. Francesc Mitjans, entrance to the Dwellings in Calle Mandri, numbers 8, 10, 12 and 14. Photograph by the author.

25. Francesc Mitjans, Calle San Mario. Photograph by the author.

05

Avant-Garde or Disguised Tradition: Reverberations from the Past in the Vocabulary of Frank Gehry, Los Angeles 1952–1985

Carlos Labarta Aizpún

Architecture, including that of the avant-garde, is a debate between reference to episodes in the past and the invention of strategies. This paper summarises a journey that explores Frank Gehry's early works in California. It is a journey that throws up a multitude of encounters, among others with the architecture of modern master Frank Lloyd Wright and the criticism of Charles Moore, and from which unexpected accords emerge. The progressive shift towards fragmentation in Gehry's architectural language is preceded by volumetric distortions and geometric explorations that, in advance of the contemporary avant-gardes, question the concept of project unity and coherence, preferring mechanisms like symbolic aggregation, volumetric dislocation and the banalisation and vulgarisation of the Modern vocabulary. At the core of the Modern tradition itself, Alberto Sartoris pre-empts examination of the destabilisation of the concept of hierarchy, confirming the fragility of categorisation. In tracing these unsuspected accords with past explorations there is no intention to assert either repetition nor copy. Rather, the intention is to contribute towards diluting, once and for all, speculation about his inventiveness..



"Whoever is used to travelling, will have been surprised arriving to places, situations, instants just like other ones already lived. It is not a matter of repetition, copy or influence. There is an unexpected accord between things — through time, through space — as mysterious and exact as that amongst the stars in a constellation. To pay attention to these coincidences, in order to draw their pattern, is always a stimulating exercise. There are those who, having known one of these accords, can not help going out seeking such similarities. Every discovery, then, coincides with a return. Accords get us home."

Josep Quetglas¹

The various avant-gardes of the 20th century were perceived within architecture as a series of innovations, seemingly without precedent, that began with the genuine revolution instigated by the Modern Movement.² For decades now — in fact for more than a century — architectural criticism and practice have been influenced, via either review or challenge, by their doctrines. In this