



EL ROSER SOCIAL CENTER: TRANSFORMING HERITAGE INTO AN INNOVATIVE FACILITY

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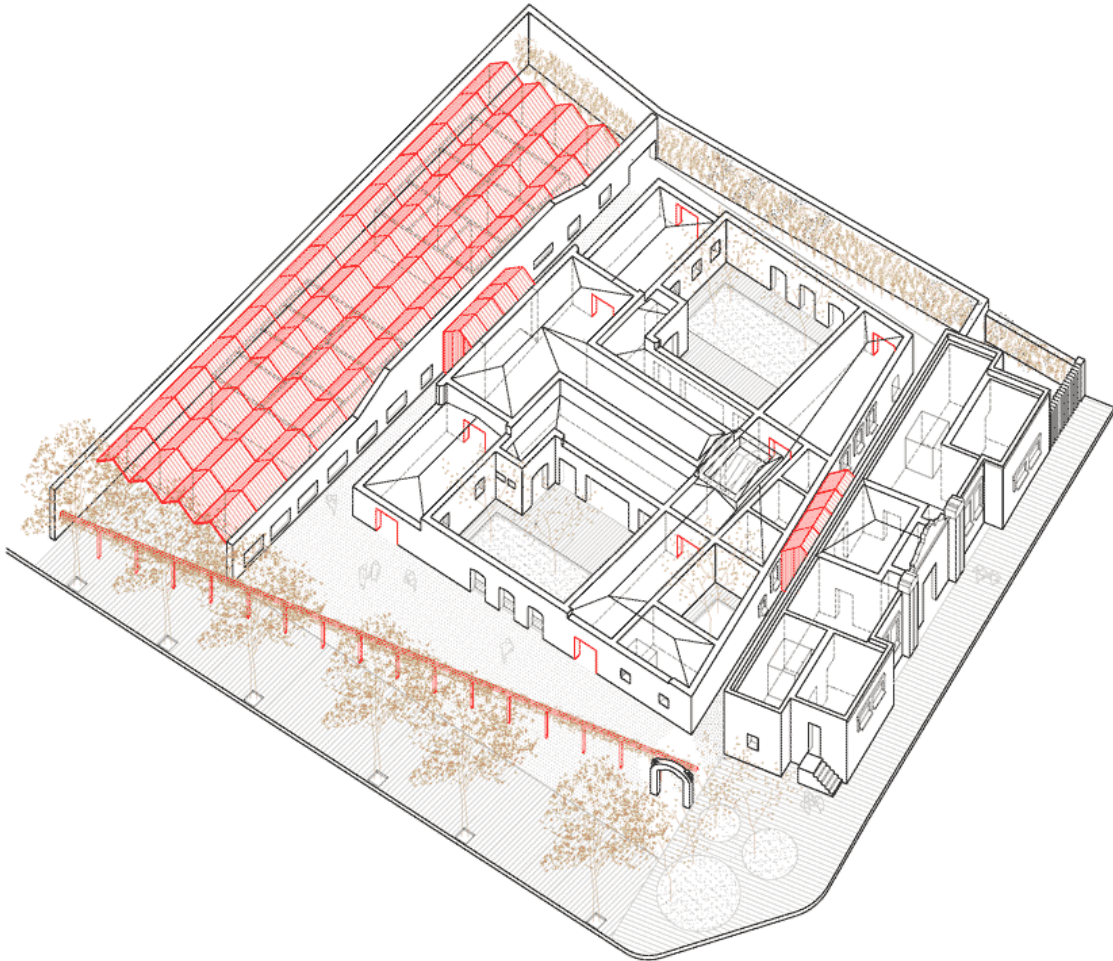
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El Roser Social Center occupies a former prison in Reus, a building listed as a Cultural Asset of Local Interest and included in the Inventory of Architectural Heritage of Catalonia. The facility is an innovative program in Spain. It comprises a homeless shelter, a soup kitchen and a community space, combining all the city's social services, which makes it the first comprehensive facility of its kind.



The proposal is the transformation of a transformation. The prison, built in 1929, was transformed into a school in 1979. This earlier intervention is taken as the basis for a project in which the various time strata dialogue with each other in a selection process that shows the concealed construction layers and draws attention to their various transformations. The project respects and recovers the original building, revealing its structure and the construction typology of the time, previously hidden, in order to evoke an image of austerity.



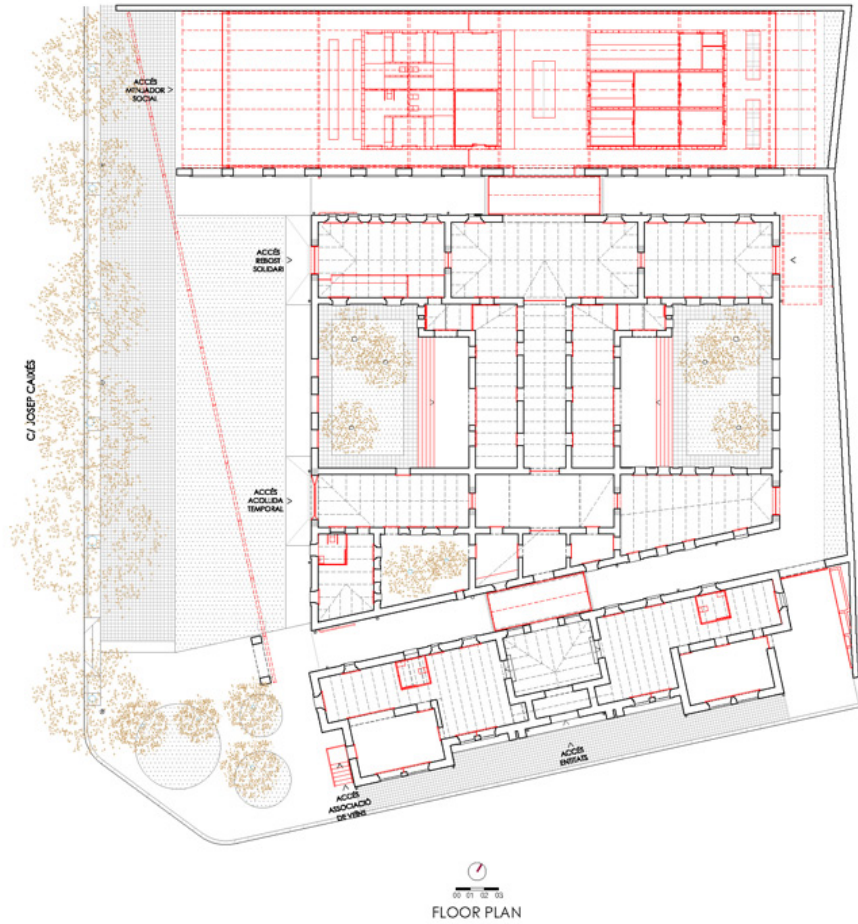
The intervention works at different scales. First, a dialectic is established between the new more ethereal, light, tectonic elements, and the composition and stereotomic stone materials of the heavier existing structure. Then, the geometry of the H-shaped floor plan laid out around two courtyards is given new openings to create lines of sight and a Palladian-style permeability that rids the complex of enclosed spaces. The interpretation, function and routes around the building's interior are reassessed to adapt to the urban surroundings, changing the relationship with the immediate environs.



The entrance to the prison used to be from the street via a monumental doorway and a narrow sidewalk, but this latest proposal eliminates the wall around the former prison yard, turning it into a public space open to the city that lets passers-by recognize the facility by the continuity of its façades. A slender steel structure is a gesture that recalls the now-absent wall, at the same time threading together three different historical periods. In turn, the conservation of the monumental doorway bears witness to the missing wall and enhances the facility's heritage value. At a more domestic scale, elements such as windows are introduced at a tangent, reinforcing the idea of a palimpsest.

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