

# A peripheral area of historical monument protection – the community approach to heritage protection in contemporary Spanish architecture

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## Abstract

*In the first decade of the millennium, the need for the reconsideration of the concept of value has intensified. The intention that had already been expressed in the value approach of modern architecture required the defining of the relationship to historicity in the approach of the architectural and art theorists at the beginning of the 20th century. [13] This imagined the relationship of old and new through a heritage that can be excavated from the deep layers of culture and denied the continuity in respect of the form. The major social and political changes occurring in the 20th century virtually forced the definition of the concept of “value”. Carthas closely related to the fields of monument protection ascertained the paraphrase of definitions and the basic requirements of an ethic-expectable creative behaviour. The heroic age of monument protection – being the 50s-70s both in international and domestic aspects – was followed by some decades when civil initiatives, developed and strengthened along the approach of the protection of cultural heritage, represented a broader social need. However, for the clarification of the concept of value, even today, there are only experiments – especially regarding monument protection that goes through an organizational transformation. Now, instead of individual historic value, heritage can be mentioned in a wider context; with official communications also emphasising the socially broader community value protection instead of authority protection.*

## Keywords

*monument protection · cultural heritage · common memory · contemporary architecture · Spanish architecture*

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Along with the few publications that recognise the concept category expansion and the regulatory changes, it is still difficult to find a way through the evaluations of contemporary architecture that are more frequently published regarding the concept of value. [15] However, there was a sudden increase in the number of contemporary utilizations, conversions and extensions affecting the built heritage in a broader sense due to the processes of the global economic depression, which modified the value approach. [1] [3] The study provides an objective interpretation for the clarification of the basic concepts of this process – but with a subjective architect-creator approach. In order to avoid getting too involved with the assessment of current Hungarian trends, the paper studies this peripheral area by using contemporary Spain examples.

## 1 Regionalism and identity

The approach, being nourished by the analytical methodology of modern architecture, which breaks with the predictive form-searching and the preconceptional form-identifying composition of historical and post-modern styles, has led to the contemporary methodology that has focused on the explanation of essential elements. When expressing local architectural characteristics, this can be called regionalism, and when the conceptual elements are highlighted it is called abstraction. The critical re-reading of the regionalist aspirations of the 60s within the category system of Frampton [5] is again timely today. [6] Through the architectural or art historical essays of the style-searching period typical of the 19th and 20th centuries, by re-reading them, an attempt can be made for the analysis of realised examples – several prominent architectural theorists have rediscovered theoretical papers. [12] Already, the opus of Frampton has highlighted Rafael Moneo, the internationally most renowned figure of the Spanish branch of critical regionalism, who “combines the various traditions in a new form.” Curtis goes on and pays special attention to a certain work of the Spanish architect, the building complex of the National Museum of Roman Art, Mérida. [6, pp. 628-630.] By applying the concept of “memory”, he emphasises the perception and reinterpretation of the past. In the archaeological ruin-complex



Fig. 1. National Museum of Roman Art, Mérida (1980-1985) by Rafael Moneo

of the former Roman province centre, Moneo opts for the most valuable Roman building tradition from the different styles of centuries layered on each other, and he innovatively, structurally evokes the given era. In connection with the building, a

series of formal analogy also should be mentioned: the concept of the basilica space, the characteristic brick vaults and the lateral light composition that strengthens monumentality. The building stridently balances between the fascination for form-identity typical of post-modern and abstraction – but the applied structural system clearly involves the building with the protective circle of regionalism. The concrete-brick wall with opus reticulatum structure, similar to the flat Roman brick, is the innovative reinterpretation of the traditional pattern. (Fig. 1.)

Along with the memory concept introduced by Curtis, the concept of community awareness can be reached, which set of concepts appears with the use of identity-carrying elements within the field of architecture. In the examples examined below, the complexity of the theme can be typically observed along with the system analogies of the use of material and structure – that can be completed by the intellectual heritage of the common cultural memory. [14] [11]

## 2 Space-value

The public square is the receiver of community activities. The lived community experience or the common intellectual heritage can be bound to object elements, spatial situations and space perceptions. By its nature, the public (urban) square is continuously changing; in recognising its identity-carrying role, the designer's responsibility in the maintenance has also become important. [7] It is not just about creating passage surfaces, but also about the opportunity to strengthen the effect of elements that can be emphasised through micro-architectural means. Recognising this, several public square rehabilitation projects started either in a natural [16] or a historical environment – to be underlined again: not merely for the reasons of tourism.

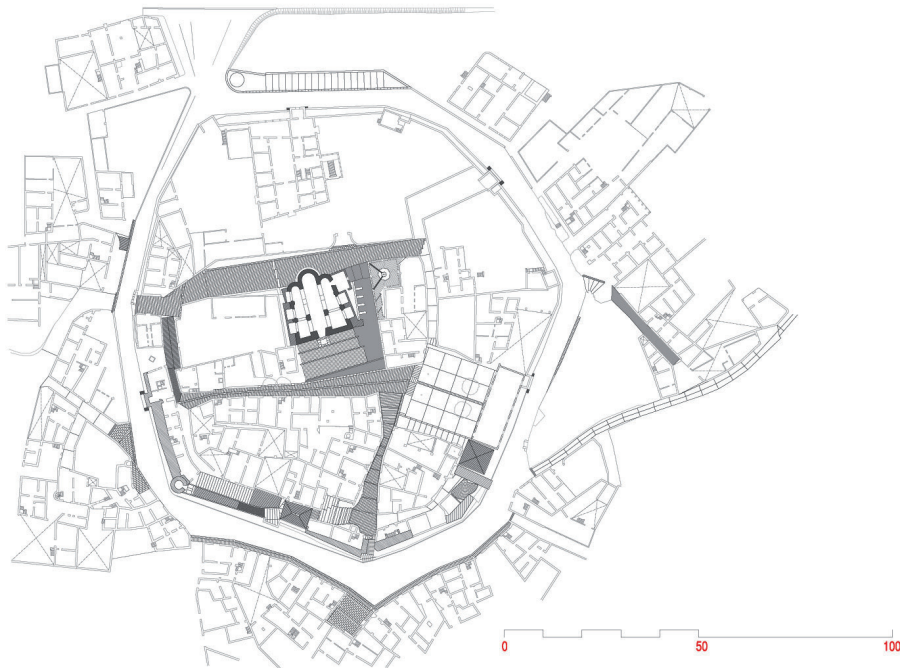


Fig. 2. Public square, Ullastret, 1982-1985. Josep Lluís Mateo



Fig. 3. Cap de Creus, Tudela, 2005-2010. EMF landscape

In front of the Romanesque church of Ullastret, north-eastern Spain, the public square was covered with a pavement-like installation. [20] In this way, the public building of the village, standing in a central location, was effectively placed on a platform. The system of the adjoining streets, stairs and retaining walls were largely paved with brick; thus the use of material became a continuation of the stone elements laid in front of the church – with this tool emphasising the intellectual role of the spiritual centre. (Fig. 2.)

Cap de Creus Peninsula, located at the northern end of the Spanish Riviera, belongs to the border zone. In this area of specific geographic endowments, the holiday village of 430 houses and servant buildings was opened in 1961, occupying part of the land with a modernist approach. Attendance at the experimental village has ceased over time (as a result of the growing appreciation of the south and west Mediterranean shores), and later, at the turn of the millennium, recognising the value of its rich topographic and tectonic system, the peninsula was declared a nature reserve. The rehabilitation of the approximately 20 acres of land included not only the demolition of buildings, but also the eradication of the invasive flora, which had appeared during the club's operational period. The remaining wall sections, left behind as mementoes in some places, create the foundations of lookouts and relaxing terraces; the wide highways were converted to narrow walkways. [24] Revoking the human nature of conquest and restoring the wound inflicted on the landscape completed a multi-decade story. A land and its natural values live as community elements and became something that could be experienced by a wider audience. (Fig. 3.)

Community establishments are meeting places. The role of the public square can be best appreciated in Mediterranean climates and is commonly completed with the activity spaces of

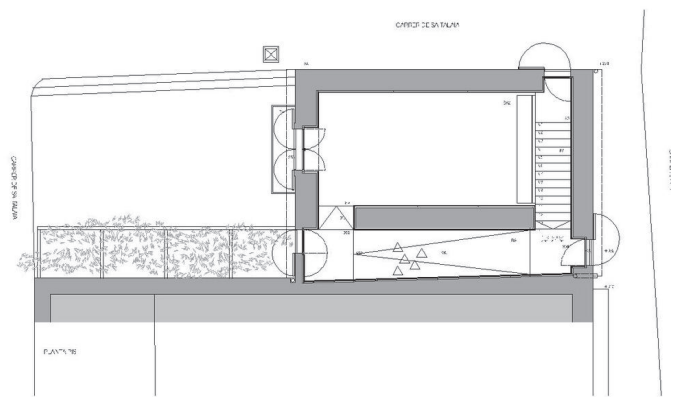


Fig. 4. Can Jeroni, Sant Josep de Sa Talaia, 2010. Mipmari

community buildings. Keeping this tradition was considered an important factor during the reconstruction of Can Jeroni community house [19] located in Ibiza, the third largest island of the Balearic Islands. The multifunctional usage of the space is ensured by the simple layout system. The two-tract space design emphasises the rank of the main spaces that are accompanied by the circulation areas. A special aspect of the two-storey space-group is that it has several connections to its environment – opposite to the entrance, at the upper street, there is a garden one floor below that also provides an intense connection to the lower street level. This way, the multi-level connections increase the area of activity surfaces, and the interior of the lower floor can also be completed with a sheltered outdoor space. (Fig. 4.)

### 3 Historical continuity

The value protection concept also came to the fore due to changing economic opportunities; the importance of building rehabilitations has increased. [9] What is considered to be natural for historic buildings, being highly important due to their

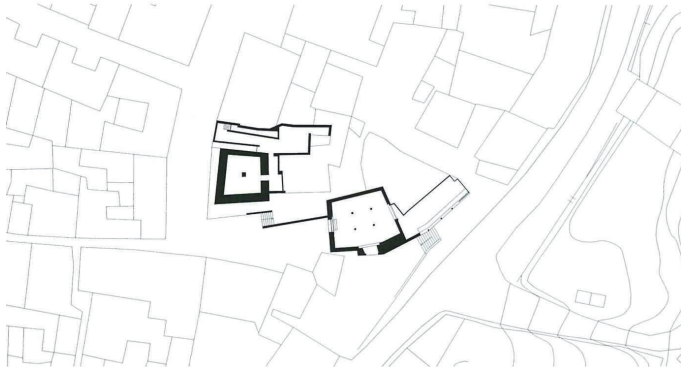


Fig. 5. Homenaje Tower, Huéscar, 2008. Antonio Himénez Torrecillas

age, does not have the same significance for industrial and transportation facilities constructed in recent centuries. However, the buildings of more current times also create part of collective memory – so their reutilization, even with changes in their function, is a gesture to people living in the area.

On the eastern border of the town of Huéscar, Andalusia, Spain, there stands the tower of the medieval Moorish fortress built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by re-using a former Roman necropolis. The complex was destroyed during the Reconquista, and over time it melted into the residential structure of the town – the reconstruction recognised the historical value and made visible the remnants of a vanished age, rather than being an object of memory. The heritage of the Moorish culture still lives on in several levels in southern Spain; here its presence could be realised through a physical rebuilding. The tower, which was dismantled to the original wall remains, and with the adjacent reconstructed gate-building, become a reference point again. [19] [25] The characteristic addition of a wooden structure to the thick walls revitalises the original function: today the watchtower is again an observation point from where not only the current texture of the town, the outstanding volume of the cathedral and the immediate environment can be seen, but also the valley encircled by mountains, opening to the east. (Fig. 5.)

In the immediate vicinity of the historical town core of León, northern Spain, being famous for its grandiose cathedral, the transportation facility has been renovated [10] [25]; this has also influenced the residential communities of the area. The main station of the suburban railway, leading north, had been abandoned for several decades, the infrastructural changes led to significant damage in neighbourhood relations. The intervention undertook a number of tasks: one to keep the object alive in the collective memory, and another to find a function with perspectives serving the local residents, right next to the centre frequently visited by tourists. A high quality public space was created, on one hand by the renovation of the passenger traffic building (meaning the preservation of the function), and on the other hand, by the conversion and extension of the disused depot. The double-nave hall space

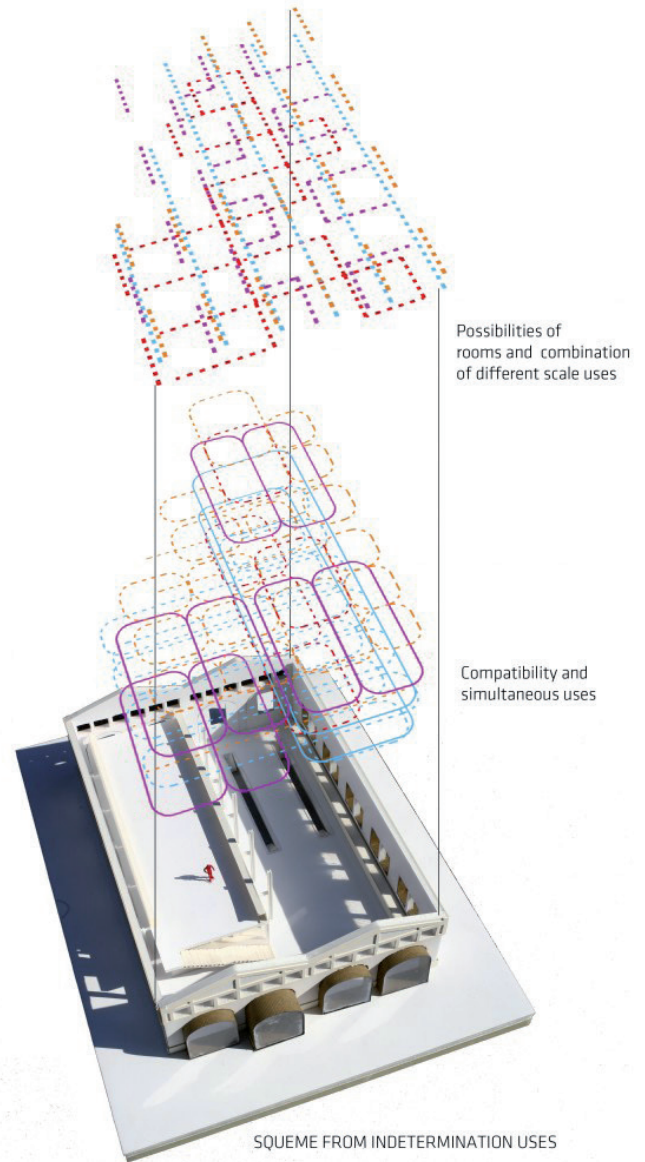


Fig. 6. Vias Cultural Centre, León, 2010. Estudio SIC

now hosts a youth-arts centre having the open use of space on the ground level and additional areas in the gallery built in one of the naves. Along the plot border, the old building is accompanied by a new wing that gives an urbanist frame; the enclosed site of the former marshalling yard now operates as a completely paved urban public square. Doubtless, the transformation has the greatest influence on the residential community of the neighbourhood: a more active usage of the area results from not only the improvement of the public transport's quality, but also from the new function that is hosted by the new spatial situation. (Fig. 6.)

The Sierras lying near Granada, Andalusia are known for their heat sources. This area of thermal waters has the natural tradition, which has developed through centuries, to live together with the presence of water – this is the prime element of the small village between the mountains. Streams rushing down from the nature reserve area served not only the evolving spa culture, but over time, also the supply of small-scale firms.

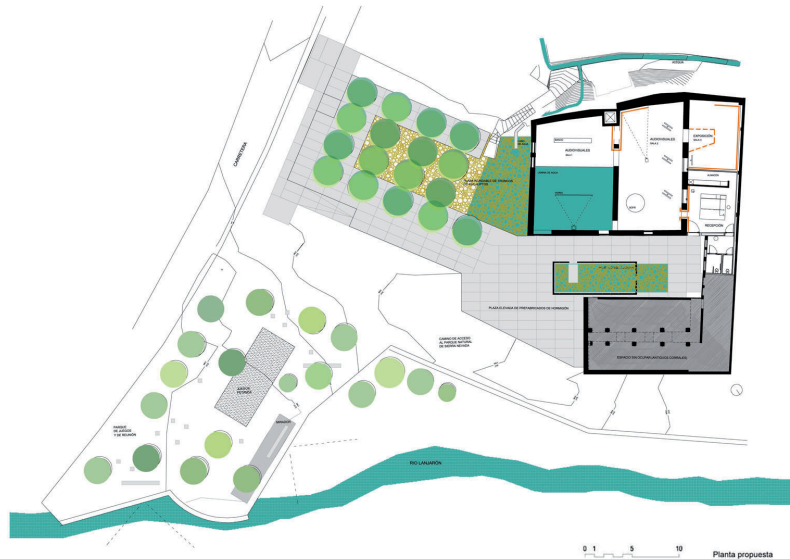


Fig. 7. Museo del Agua, Lanjarón, 2010. Juan Domingo Santos

Previously a slaughterhouse had worked on the eastern edge on the settlement – the abandoned industrial area provided an exhibition site for water, which occupies an essential place in the collective memory of the community. [15] [26] [21] Water is a renewable resource and a basic life-giving element; many aspects of its use are displayed in a small exhibition. The gate-like construction identifies with and recalls the framed wooden structure of bathhouses built at the turn of the century next to the springs, this way it conserves the still directly experienced culture's memory-element, identifiable with form and structure, in an abstract form. Its role in the situation of the settlement-edge location is twofold, on one hand, the Water Museum is a tourist attraction, on the other hand, it ensures the maintenance of the local residents' cultural memory. (Fig. 7.)

#### 4 Relationship-evaluation

Naturally, collective memory is bound more strongly to existing establishments with historical values. The evaluation of historicity can be connected to physical and intellectual characteristics. In the case of material reality, the natural decay indicates the time frame, while in the cultural context, the collective historical memory gives connections to artefacts. Almería is one of the most important major port cities of the southern shore of Andalusia, given its geographical importance; the defence works system created an eternal part of the city skyline. The reconstruction of Hoya Wall of Almería, from the time of the Moors, climbing up to the citadel [2] generated a huge debate. Taking into consideration the undoubtedly unworthy condition of the tourist attraction, besides its reinforcement, the architects applied explicit additions: they completed the mass of the dilapidated stone tower with a steel structure. Next to the stonewall, weathering Corten-steel sheets appear, distinctly, according to the modernist approach of the Venice Charter. Despite the choice of material assimilating in

its colour, the overly credible attitude triggered the protest of local civilians. The concern felt over the compromise of the historical value became dominant over sustainability intentions. [8] Also, the appearance of natural decay is part of the common collective memory connected to an artefact – so any changes to it, the redefinition of cyclicity, can be carried out in an ethical way only by very careful means. (Fig. 8.)

The centre established in Roaban, the centre of the Ribera del Duero wine region, highlighted the time-carrying value of fragmentation. The building complex was built on the southern border of the settlement located on a small plateau; its siting originates from centuries-old traditions. [22] The oldest element of the place is the Hospital San Juan Bautista from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the architectural quality of which is demonstrated even today by the wall remains of the gate surviving many conversions. This most valuable detail is surrounded by building parts constructed in several phases – the designer team modelled just this continuous improvement when they added the new parts to the organic unity of the elements. [18, pp. 42-59.] Closing the building volume designed with a central corridor, the late-medieval wall section was placed in a crucial position; next to it, the additional building parts appear as a frame. A new small town piazza was born between the masses – below ground level, the administrative, educational and research centre was placed in a multi-storey volume. The space, created between the building elements without any historical traditions, provides a panorama of the wine region's wide horizon, where a tower-like mass emerges; it marks the area occupied by the building complex sunk underground, thus being invisible. Another important feature of the intervention is the homogeneous use of stone. Continuing the material use of the old buildings concatenates the classical historical forms with the new abstract building masses. The fragmentation referring to the different layers built on each other, as well as the respect for

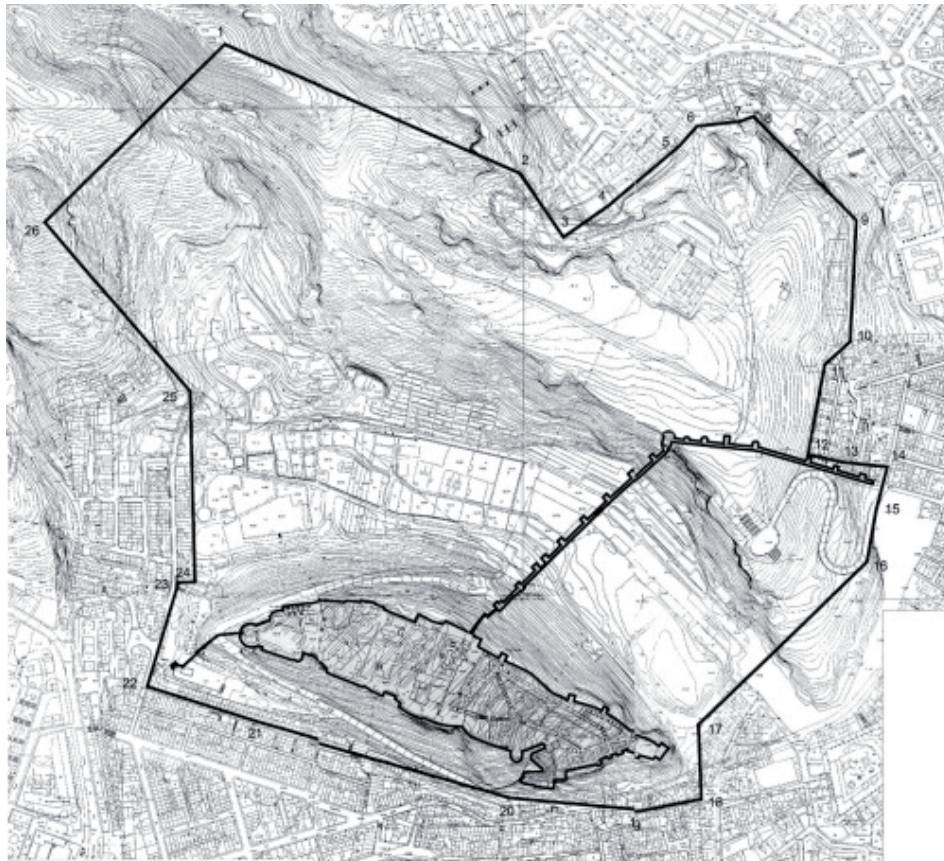


Fig. 8. Muralla de la Hoya, Almería, 2011. Jesús Basterra

the local use of materials, resulted in the creation of an appropriate building. The building complex, respectful of historicity, can be characterized by the dominant continuation of strong spiritual and physical dimensions. (Fig. 9.)

The developments that emphasise the presence of industrial technologies, which had been relevant for several centuries, may become elements that strengthen the historical consciousness of the community. Their industrial historical aspects are important, but what is even more significant is the presentation of the life of associated artisans, the description of the parallel story of the hosting residential environment being related in several aspects. Establishing the ceramic centre of the Triana district in Seville reveals a complex space of community life. [17] Already in the 16th century, a multitude of manufacturing was present on the right bank of the Guadalquivir. The joint plot manifests the organic development typical of this region, where residential buildings, workshops and shops grown together create a symbiosis. Keeping the volume of the building masses standing on the street line, the museum, which is arranged along a directed path, solves the access to the inside of the block of buildings. The complex consists of the establishments of seven kilns; a water source well and reservoir; the mill set up to produce pigments; clay storages; storehouses and workshops. The rough industrial architecture becomes the exhibit, but at the same time provides authentic spatial dimensions of the technological processes, which can be followed through the exhibition fixtures. This environment

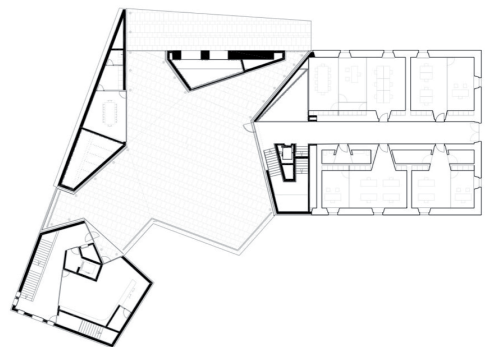


Fig. 9. Headquarters, "Ribera del Duero" Roa, 2010. Estudio Barozzi Veiga

presents not only the material culture; it also reveals a way of life - the economic and social context of the era - and beyond the industrial products, their artistic aspects as well. So it is about a centuries-old heritage of a biome - being an important component of both the direct historical context and the region too. Here a humble and peaceful architectural resolution can be seen: the new building mass frames the industrial building parts in space, and the shading system made up of several thousand ceramic cylinders, installed in front of the glass facades becomes the main characteristic of this new part. In this case, the deepest identifying element of the community's existence is ceramics - it provides the memory of the community culture in a broader sense. (Fig. 10.)

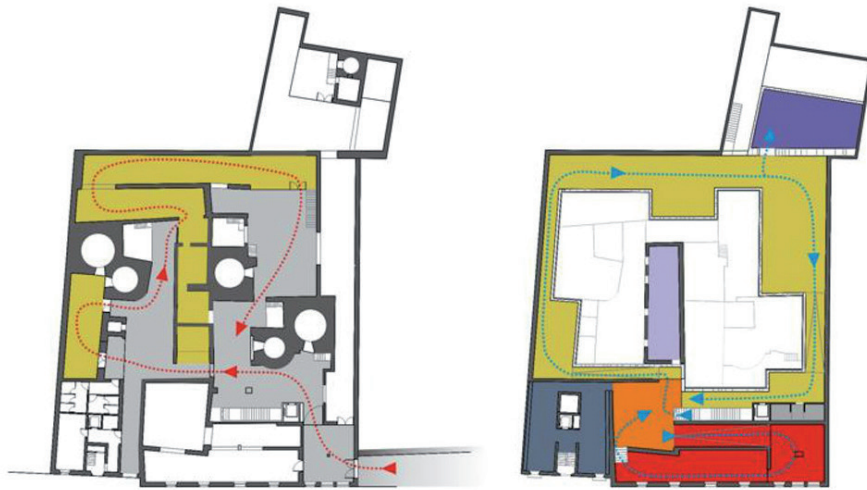


Fig. 10. Museo Ceramica Triana, Seville, 2013. AF6 Arquitectos

### Summary

The appearance of regionality at the turn of the millennium composes with the use of symbolic elements. The creative method, based on modern architecture, highlights the characteristics: material, structure and form. However, their wanton emphasis and the over-emphasis on certain features is not an architectural manifesto, but rather a search for connection, a

redefined system of relations with our heritage. At the same time, the composition that highlights some architectural components appears concentrated and is not without abstraction; it can be received through its authentic basic elements and is built on deep-rooted cultural relations. It becomes admissible. Thus, it becomes an authentic publisher of the physical and intellectual heritage of the community.

### Acknowledgement

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