

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

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MIXED USE

Grimshaw's Bath Spa Bing Thom mixes it in Vancouver Borgos Dance in Valencia



MARKET FORCES

This historic Art Nouveau era market in Valencia has been imaginatively restored to become part of city life once more.

MARKET, VALENCIA, SPAIN
ARCHITECT
BORGOS DANCE

| The monumental east arch, flanked by a quartet of ceramic flower kiosks.



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Valencia – the much-underrated third city of Spain – is full of remarkable buildings, from the medieval silk exchange with its tall twisted columns to the flamboyant food market with its green parrot weathervane, and Calatrava’s gargantuan City of Arts and Sciences. None offers greater surprise and delight than this newly restored Colon Market hall, which was designed in 1913 by Francisco Mora, a talented practitioner of *Modernismo*. As in St Pancras Station, ornate brick facades bracket a soaring iron and glass vault, but here the contrast

between art and engineering, decoration and functionalism is even more pronounced.

To the west is a grand arch with a three-domed room inserted above the entrance, encrusted with ceramic ornament and crowned with painted tiles and the city’s coat of arms surmounted by a black bat. Green octopuses flop over the finials of the domes, which are lined with floral tilework, and this upper room, formerly an office, is now the El Alto restaurant. At the east end is a Gaudiesque arch of patterned brick with a sinuously

arched window in the upper half. Ceramic flower kiosks with flared glass canopies extend inside and out from the base. Bridging these gallimaufries of modern, medieval and Moorish is a plain, graceful iron vault, with tapered, minimally ornamented columns supporting trusses over a lofty, skylit nave, and shallow-pitched roofs sheltering open-sided aisles.

Despite its Grade I listing and its location on a fashionable shopping street, surrounded by elegant apartment buildings of the same era, the market shut down in 1985 and continued to

deteriorate. It was saved by the popular mayor, Rita Barbera Nolla, who has done much to enhance Valencia’s architectural heritage and remembered childhood shopping expeditions to the Colon. Working through Aumsa, the city’s development agency, she initiated a programme of restoration and new construction. Three levels of subterranean parking for residents and visitors, and one for commercial activities, would provide revenue and unplug surrounding streets. The market had been built on a foundation of rubble over alluvial soil and was still settling. Pile caps were made to transfer the vertical loads to a new steel and concrete raft, and the newly excavated basement was protected from seepage by a substantial diaphragm wall. Rusted iron members were carefully removed and replaced a section at a time, while the tile and brickwork was being meticulously restored.

In summer 2001, as the civic works progressed, five architectural firms – including three from Spain and Kazuyo

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Unused since 1985, the restored market hall brings new light to Valencia’s evening cityscape.

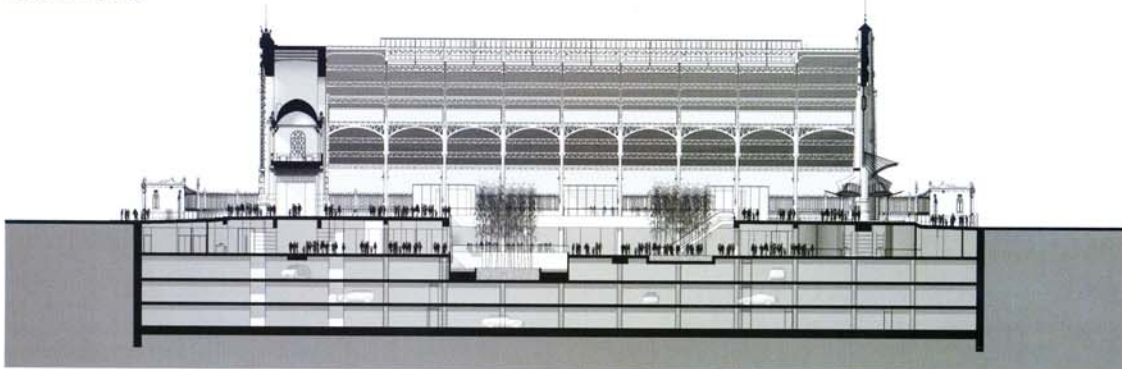
3
Looking east through the market hall, a range of retail installations occupy a new ground floor and subterranean public realm.

4, 5
Six glass prisms with translucent Barrisol ceilings contain shops, stairs and cafes.

MARKET, VALENCIA, SPAIN

ARCHITECT

BORGOS DANCE







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Sejima from Japan – were invited to submit ideas for revitalizing the building. The London-based partnership of Borgos Dance were chosen for their minimalist approach, which treated the market floor as a public plaza and put most of the new construction on the level below. Etienne Borgos was familiar with Valencia, having spent several years there as project architect on Norman

Foster's Congress Centre (AR August 1998); Simon Dance had previously worked for John Pawson on residential projects and the Cathay Pacific Lounge in the Hong Kong airport terminal (AR January 1999).

To create an impressive plaza, they paved the floor with limestone and extended it beyond the side roofs to the iron and stone fence. Eight 'green screens'

of bamboo in limestone planters that double as glass-backed benches are deployed around the perimeter to provide protection from wind and conceal emergency ventilation points to the lower levels. The ironwork was repainted in its original tone of pistachio. To either side of the nave are three cubic pavilions, 7.4 x 6.4m on plan and 4m high, containing shops, escape stairs, and a pair of cafés with tables spilling out onto the plaza. They are clad in opti-white glass panels that are anchored to the slab and tied together at the top by an insulated stainless structural plate, and are lit from translucent cast glass cores and from lights concealed behind a translucent Barrisol ceiling membrane.

By day, these pavilions seem as insubstantial as soap bubbles, dematerialized by the brilliant natural light; at night they glow like lanterns beneath the springy, softly illuminated vault. Lighting consultant Claude Engel installed tiny uplights on the capitals of the columns and external projectors to play on the facades.

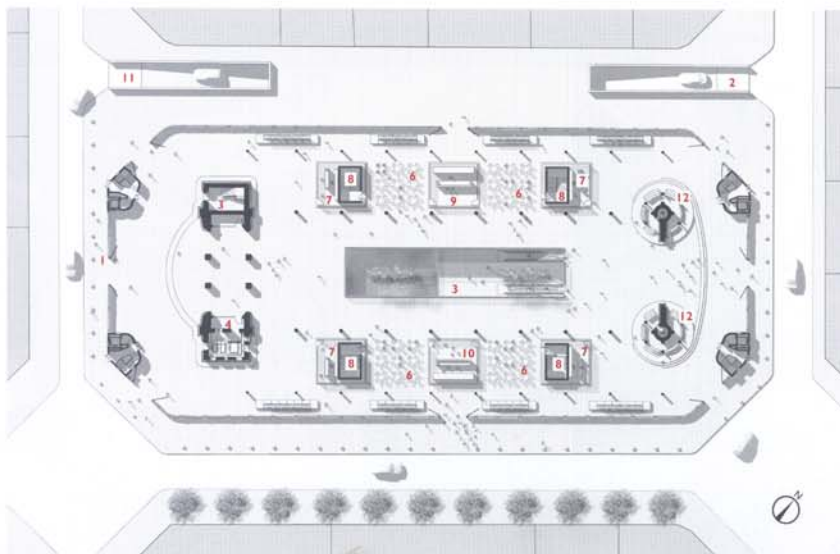
Escalators lead down from the plaza, through a central opening with a clear glass balustrade, towards an 8m-high water wall that flows into a reflecting pool

while cooling the air and providing a soothing murmur. This lower concourse has handsomely detailed glass-fronted shops down the long sides, a restaurant at the west end, and two semicircles of stone-faced market stalls wrapped around the pile caps of the east portal. In its present, gentrified state, the Colon complements the culinary cornucopia of the municipal market – which rivals La Boqueria in Barcelona for the quality and variety of its offerings – and is a comfortable fit with its neighbours. Borgos Dance have applied the skills they honed with Foster and Pawson to create additions that are reticent and refined, giving new life to a glorious landmark.

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Photographs
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The original 1913 structure, designed by Francisco Mora, has been painstakingly restored to its original pistachio hue.
7
The 8m-high water wall screens the restaurant, tempers the air and creates a calm sunken oasis.



- 1 historic perimeter fence
- 2 car parking access
- 3 historic stair access
- 4 new lift core
- 5 new atrium
- 6 new terraces
- 7 retail pavilion
- 8 escape stairs
- 9 delicatessen
- 10 café
- 11 car park exit
- 12 flower stalls

