

Case Studies

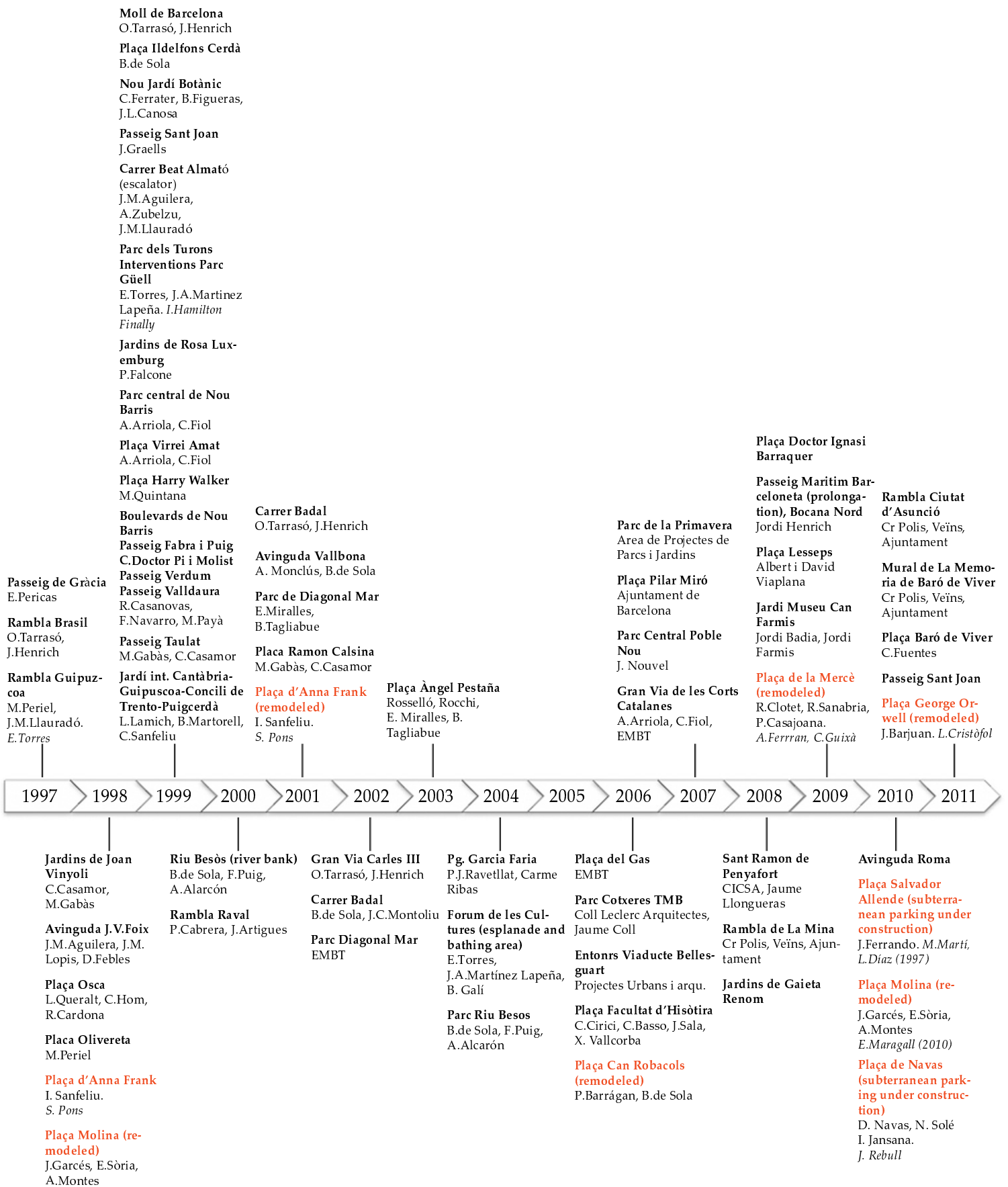


Fig.39 Plaça Can Robacols, Plaça George Orwell, Plaça de Soller, Fossar de les Moreres, Plaça Molina.

*“Así, durante la primera mitad de los años ochenta, un importantísimo número de realizaciones en urbanización de plazas y parques, en sistematización del espacio viario, en construcción de equipamientos, etc., fueron transformando de manera positiva espacios tanto de los sectores centrales como, sobre todo, de los barrios periféricos, en una manera de hacer micro-urbanismo próxima a la acupuntura, pero con efectos inductivos sobre los tejidos próximos” (Font, 2000: 76)*

There are fourteen projects of squares and gardens selected from each district as an example or case study of the various small-scale interventions applied in Barcelona as a process of urban acupuncture. They are analyzed according to their historical facts, design, public art, and materials. *“These spaces are all public spaces that were strategically selected to start the process of metastasis and are located in built-up areas where it is necessary to begin the reconstruction and reinforcement of their identities” (Bohigas, 1987: 12).* They are an integral part of the urban fabric possessing a formal and functional relationship with the features they comprise: public art, street furniture, pavement, vegetation, facades, surroundings, etc.









1. Plaça de la Mercè
2. Fossar de les Moreres
3. Plaça George Orwell
4. Plazas de la Hispanitat and Pablo Neruda
5. Plaça de Navas
6. Jardins d'Olga Sacharof
7. Plaça Molina

8. Plaça John Lennon
9. Plaça d'Anna Frank
10. Plaça de la Palmera
11. Plaça Can Robacols
12. Plaça d'Islandia
13. Plaça de Sóller
14. Plaça Salvador Allende

## 1. Plaça de la Mercè

District Ciutat Vella

Ramón Sanabria, Pere Casajoana, Rosa María Clotet

1983, remodeled in 2009

2,150m<sup>2</sup>

Plaça de la Mercè is a new square which appears to have existed since the Baroque Period. It is the result of the demolition of a block of houses that rose up among Ample, Braille and Voltres streets. Up until September 1981 the square consisted of a small residual space resulting from a reformation project of displacing the Mercè church's façade. "*La nueva plaza de la Mercè (...) donde el esponjamiento físico ha producido un foco social y una reconsideración de la estructura del barrio*" (Bohigas, 1985, pp.42), and "... *ha constituït una millora considerable en la trama urbana*" (Bohigas, 1983: 62).

The square's proportions create a unique space dominated by the church's curved baroque façade and the 'Cámara Oficial de la Industria' neo-baroque offices, that give the space a baroque atmosphere, "*ha nacido una nueva plaza barroco-neoclásica: la plaza de la Mercè...*" (Bohigas, 1985: 88).

The buildings revealed are of such character that they appear to have been always designed to face the square. Their facades were cleaned and restored, "*gracias a esto, las casas... pueden verse hoy tal como las dibujaron sus arquitectos y forman una plaza estilísticamente controlada*" (Bohigas, 1985: 88).

The square's paving, such as in Placa Sant Jaume or Placa del Rei, rests on a longitudinal axis. Nevertheless, the general composition of the square generates a problem in the axis between the church and the Medinaceli palace facing it. Therefore, on the church's side, next to Ample street, three flags are placed on a stone base, and on the palace's side a fountain with Adria Ferran's Neptune sculpture is placed with an adjacent grove of holm oak trees and benches, all attempting to reduce the space's geometry and to balance and reinforce the church's axis and eccentricity over the square. (Bohigas, 1985).

However, recently, the flag base has been replaced by a terrace belonging to an adjacent restaurant and the benches next to the sculpture no longer exist. Along Ample street, cast metal lamp posts and a bicycle parking have been placed leaving the drains aligned on the opposite side. Four small sphinxes, the work of the sculptor Celdoni Guixó, complete the sculpture and emit water to the fountain (Bohigas, 1983).

The pavement is of 60x30cm slabs of slate interrupted by two concentric rectangles of 90x30cm and 90x20cm white travertine starting near the church and ending at the feet of the fountain, leaving the center of the square empty of urban elements.



Fig.41 Plaça de la Mercè opposite view

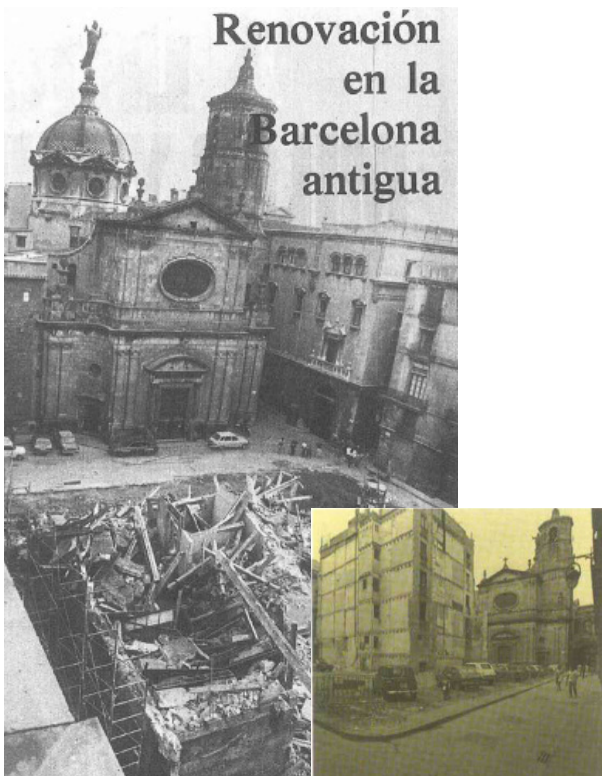
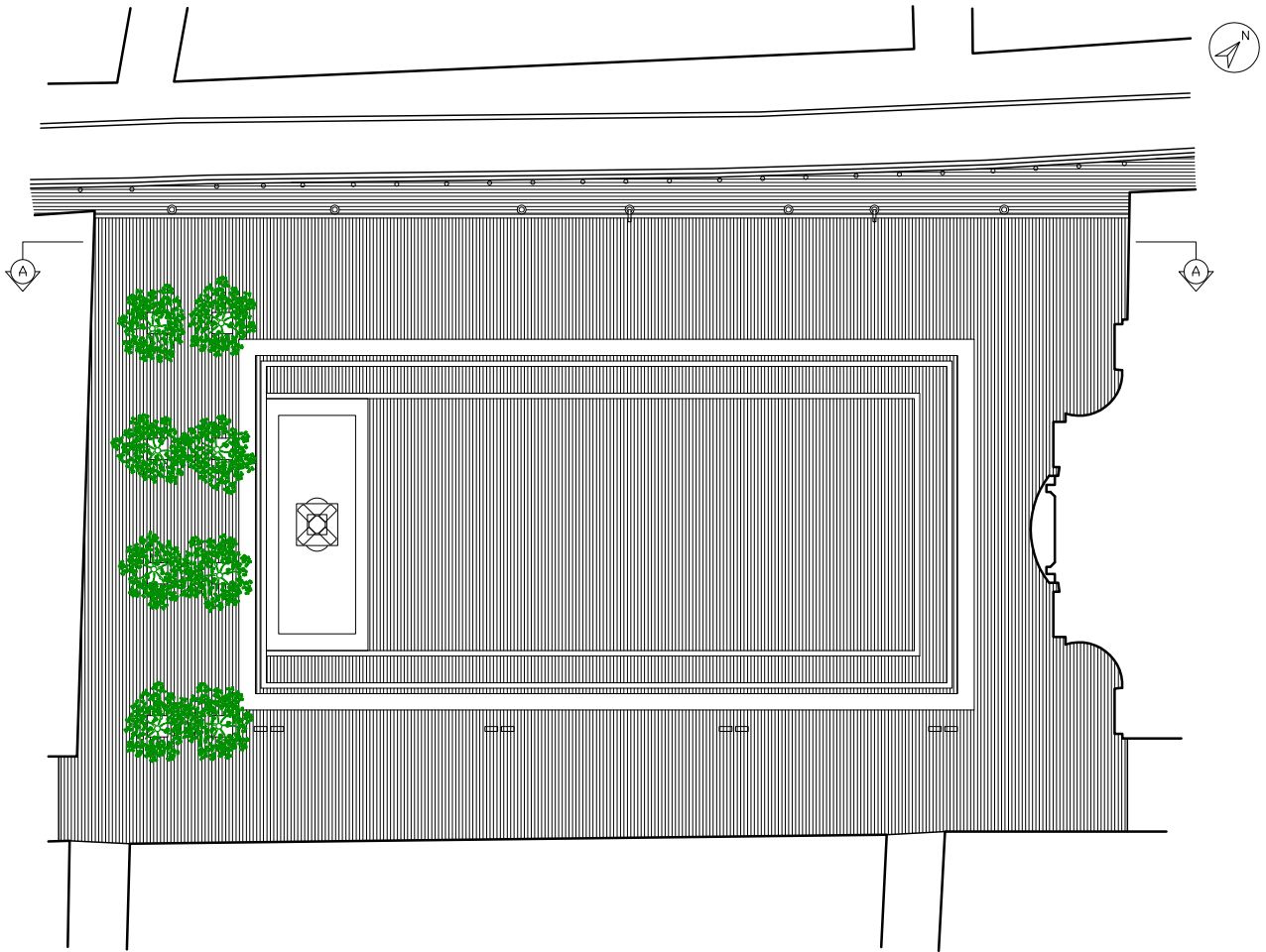


Fig.40 Plaça de la Mercè Before (1981)



Fig.42 Plaça de la Mercè After (2011)



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## 2. Fossar de Les Moreres

District Ciutat Vella

Carme Fiol

1989

989m<sup>2</sup>

This small square is located on an old cemetery known as 'Fossar de Les Moreres' that belongs to the adjacent church of Santa Maria del Mar, in which were buried the combatants who defended the city before it fell to the Bourbon troops in the siege of 1714. It has become a place of independence celebrated every 11 of September. It is what we call a symbolic space or a Memorial site that was developed after the demolition of the one storey dwellings that once existed in the quarter. There existed also a bridge (1700) that crossed the dwellings and connected the church to where the Captain General's palace once stood.<sup>17</sup>



Fig.43 The square before the demolitions.

In 1986 the bridge was taken down and rearrangement of the the area started according to a design by Lluís Domènech and Roser Amadó. Jesús Roccañin i Serrano presented a sculpture for the 1714 Memorial that highlighted one of the corners of the square with a raised pyramid-shaped platform above which a flame would continuously burn: *"lo que los vecinos quieren, que es lo que recoge nuestro proyecto, es que el Fossar se convierta en una plaza pública y un memorial."* However, the project was

put on hold and required to be redefined due to a series of complications.

In 1989, a new draft was presented by Carme Fiol who designed an open space bounded by a 30m long wall, between the square and the street, of red granite brought from USSR and the same granite found in the mausoleum of Lenin.<sup>18</sup> On this low wall some verses of Pitarra are inscribed dedicated to the martyrs of 1714, *"Als Màrtirs de 1714: Al fossar de les Moreres no s'hi enterra cap traïdor; fins perden nostres banderes serà l'urna de l'honor."* It is an open space square with only three 'Moreras' or mulberry trees planted in one of its corners. The polygonal shaped space, where once was the cemetery, has a concave character and is paved with inclined red bricks (20x10x4.5cm) that converge in the center, near the red wall, where a circular drain is placed symbolizing the spilt blood from the battle.<sup>19</sup>

Around the polygonal area there is paving of 15x20x8cm grey sandstone cobbles and 60x40x3 sandstone slabs of Montjuïc stone, as a trace of the recent history of the place, creating an interesting texture and contrast with the red color of the bricks and granite.<sup>20</sup>

In 1997 the surroundings, especially the remaining houses giving onto the square, were restored and refurbished by the City Council, PROCIVESA, Omnium Cultural, Closa Alegret and Marks & Spencer. Later in 2001, a new element or symbol was introduced to the square facing Santa Maria del Mar church. It is a torch or incense burner designed by Albert Viaplana. It is a well designed 15m high iron structure painted the same red color as the pavement with an eternal flame fed by the 'Gas Natural' pipes. However, the torch witnessed some criticism from the neighbors claiming that they had not been consulted and that Carme Fiol's design was perfectly acceptable and required no additions. Fiol,

17. FABRE, Jaume. Huertas, Josep M. El Fossar de les Moreres. *Web Art Pública* [online]. Departament Urbanisme. Ajuntament de Barcelona- Universitat de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: <www.bcn.cat/artpublic>

18. REMESAR, Antoni. El Fossar de les Moreres. *Web Art Pública* [online]. Departament Urbanisme. Ajuntament de Barcelona- Universitat de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: <www.bcn.cat/artpublic>

19. FABRE, Jaume. Huertas, Josep M. El Fossar de les Moreres. *Web Art Pública* [online]. Departament Urbanisme. Ajuntament de Barcelona- Universitat de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: <www.bcn.cat/artpublic>

20. FIOI, Carme. *Fossar de les Moreres 1989* [online]. Arriola & Fiol Arquitectes [Accessed: 23 November 2011]. Available at: <http://arquitectes.coac.net/arriolafiol/>

considered it as a flagrant violation of her project that was designed as a public space with a high symbolic value; a square and a monument at the same time.<sup>21</sup>



Fig.44 View of the square with the wall and the sculpture.



Fig.46 View of the square with the mullberry trees.

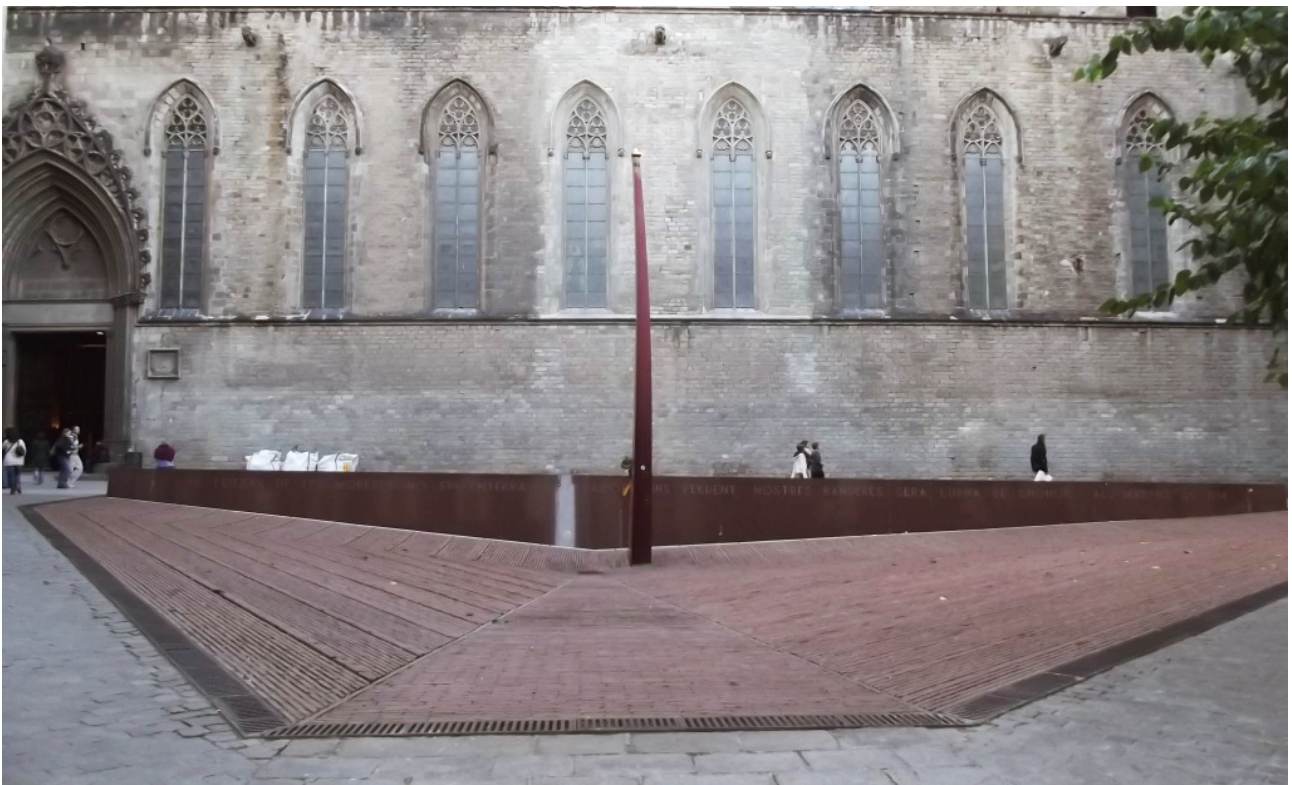
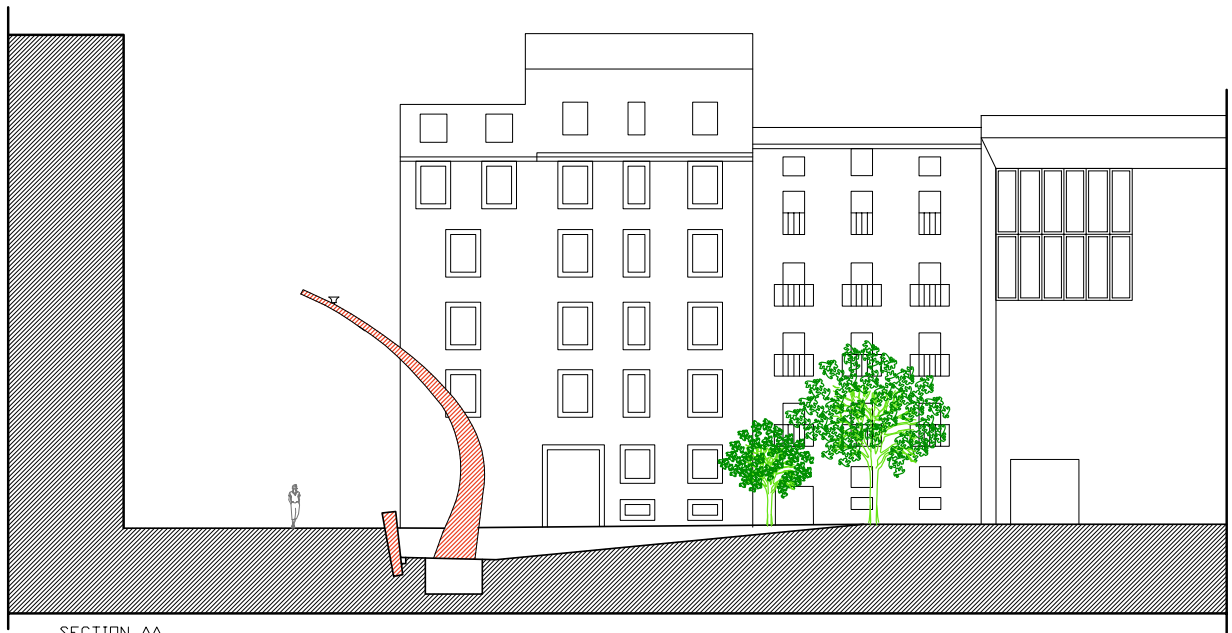
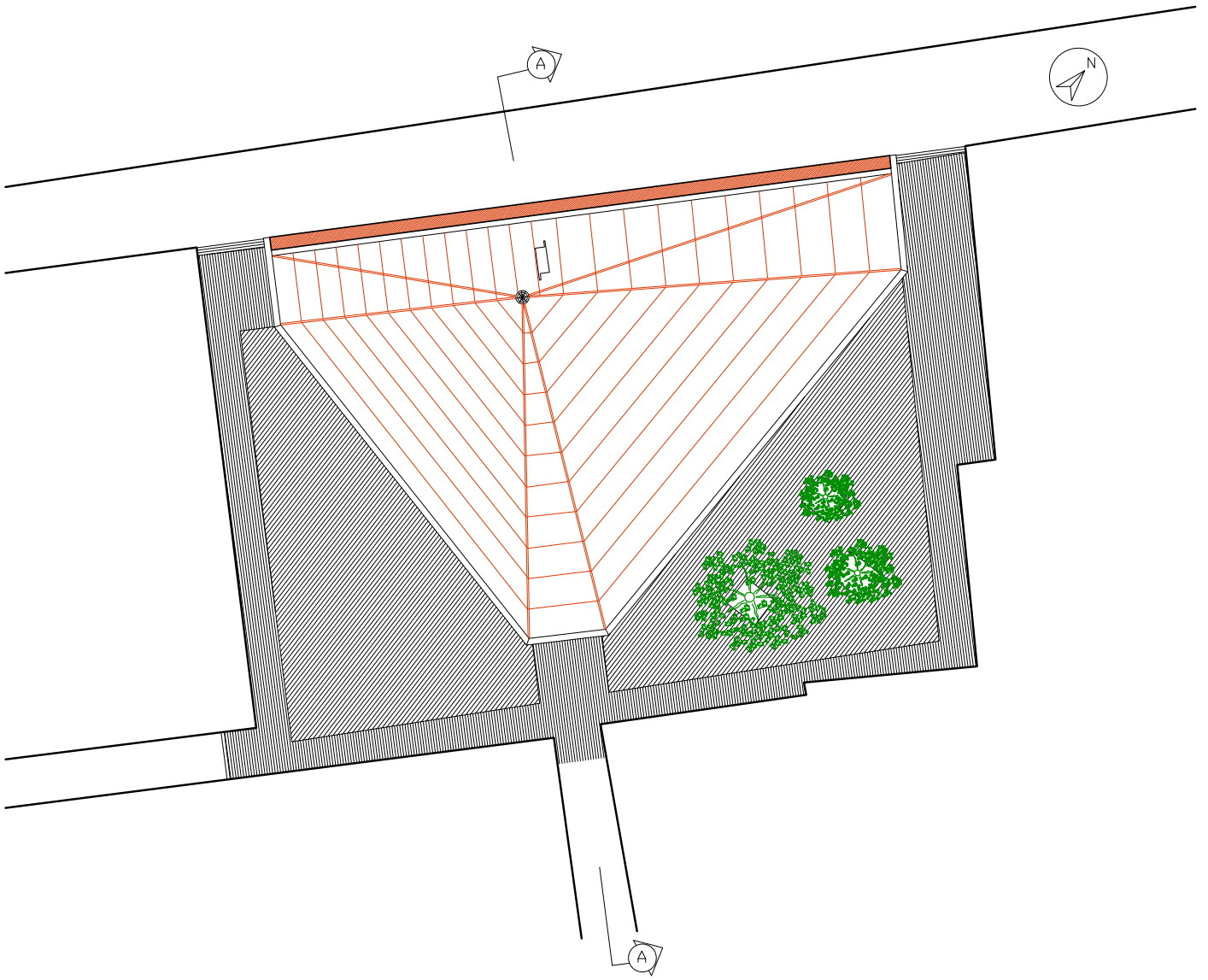
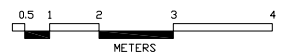


Fig.45 Back side of the square with Santa Maria del Mar's facade

21. REMESAR, Antoni. El Fossar de les Moreres. *Web Art Pública* [online]. Departament Urbanisme. Ajuntament de Barcelona- Universitat de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: < [www.bcn.cat/artpublic](http://www.bcn.cat/artpublic) >



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### 3. Plaça George Orwell

District Ciutat Vella  
Josep Barjuan, Joan Miras  
1991  
950m<sup>2</sup>

This square emerged from demolishing a block of buildings between the streets Escudellers, Arenes and Arai. It has a form of a triangle enclosed by old buildings. The special morphology of this square is due to the buildings' consolidation and their non-orthogonal alignment. This type of situation is common throughout the old city.

The tearing down operation to provide a new public space was a necessary matter for the Barrio Gotico *"precisamente en uno de los pocos ejes que lo atraviesan de este a oeste, tal como ya lo contemplaba el PGM, operación destinada al fomento de la revitalización del tejido residencial y comercial del entorno"* (Barjuan, 1993: 100).

Plaça George Orwell is defined by a triangular platform (that currently does not exist), leaving the sides linked to the buildings and streets free for circulation, merchandize transportation, and terraces. This platform is reached by three steps preventing the vehicles' access. Its pavement is of granite cut in a triangular shape and its perimeter and surrounding is of 60x40cm sandstone slabs.

In 2011, the triangular platform was modified by removing the three steps leading to it and converting it to a single inclined triangular level. Before being removed, these steps had been a meeting point of mass gatherings that derived, especially at night, uncivic behavior causing inconvenience to the residents.

Further repairs were applied to the pavement and the sewers. The sculpture has been relocated on the new single level of the square and a new playground had been installed facilitating the family usage of this public space.<sup>22</sup> The playground is covered with yellow and green vinyl. Few trees are located inside and around the playground of pine, celtis and oak trees with triangular, circular and parallelogram-shaped protectors. Upon the

22. Foment Ciutat Vella [online]. [Accessed: 25 October 2011]. Available at: <[http://www.fomentciutatvella.net/fitxa\\_actuacions\\_marcha.php?idioma=1](http://www.fomentciutatvella.net/fitxa_actuacions_marcha.php?idioma=1)>



request of the residents, there are no benches in the square (except for two chairs in the playground) to prevent it from becoming a haunt for vagrants.<sup>23</sup> The lighting is located in the square and on the buildings' facades along with few projectors to lighten up Leandre Cristòfol's surrealist sculpture located near the crossing of Escudellers and Arai streets. Originally it is known as 'Monument' and popularly as 'La Oliva' or 'El Tripi' a name also given to the square itself. It is the large-scale version of an original (in wood) measuring approximately 80cm that was exhibited at the 'Cercle Mercantil de Lleida' along with other works of the same sculptor belonging to the period 1930-1935. It is made of stainless steel, reinforced concrete and wood and expresses one of the persistent themes of surrealism: sex and the female principle.<sup>24</sup> The square is always crowded with tourists and eventually it did attract vagrants, drug dealers and delinquencies to the extent that in 2001 the government placed surveillance cameras for safety reasons.



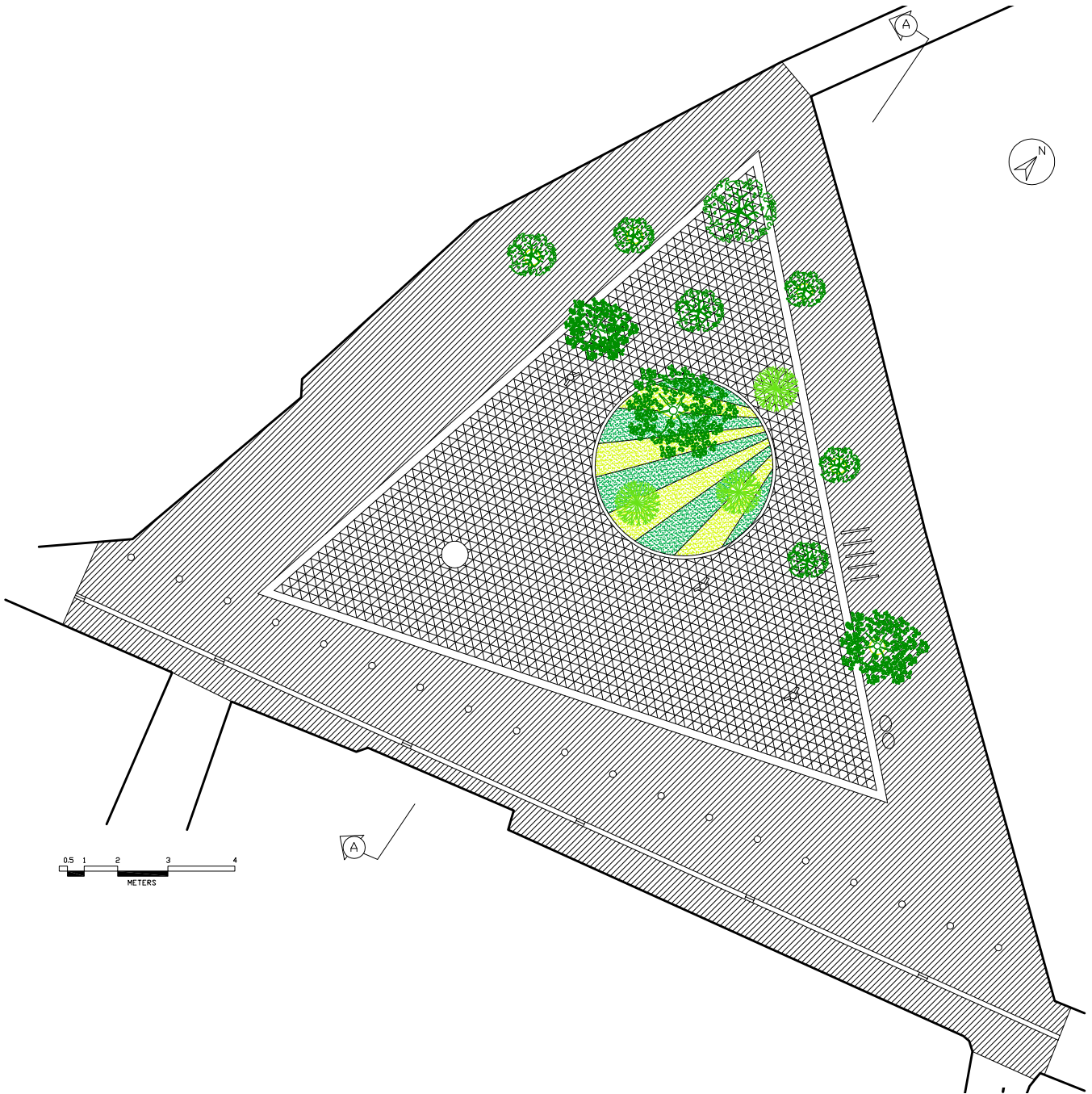
Fig.48 "Monument"



Fig.47 Panoramic view of the square. On the top right is the view of the square's platform before being removed.

23. FABRE, Jaume. Huertas, Josep M. Monument, conocido popularmente como la Oliva o El Tripi. *Web Art Pública* [online]. Departament Urbanisme. Ajuntament de Barcelona- Universitat de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: <[www.bcn.cat/artpublic](http://www.bcn.cat/artpublic)>

24. MIRALLES, Francesc. Monument, conocido popularmente como la Oliva o El Tripi. *Web Art Pública* [online]. Departament Urbanisme. Ajuntament de Barcelona- Universitat de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: <[www.bcn.cat/artpublic](http://www.bcn.cat/artpublic)>



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#### 4. Plazas de la Hispanitat and Pablo Neruda

District Eixample

Maria Dolores Febles, Ramón Auset

1990

9,527m<sup>2</sup>

The Plazas de la Hispanitat and Pablo Neruda are a type of a “square garden” or “plaza-jardín”. They are situated on an immense road intersection, separated by Marina street and delimited by Sardenyà street, Aragó and Avinguda Diagonal which plays a big part in shaping these squares and dividing Plaça Pablo Neruda from its original block, CEIP Ramon Llull, giving it its scalene triangular shape. The PGM stated them as green zones, however, a part of the Plaça de la Hispanitat block is built-up and this building is the only limit to the square.

Both squares have an organic-shaped design, characterized by pavements, green slopes, gardens, and trees located near the perimeters of the space. The central circular area is left as a ‘place to be’ and isolated from the surrounding roads. Using the same system of slopes and ground movements in both squares –though divided by Marina Street– gives a sense of unity to the whole space protecting it from the harsh and hostile surroundings.

The central protected spaces are used as playgrounds accessed by small slopes or steps that lead to a large circular or oval-shaped space and a lengthy line of lighting and benches tracing its organic shape. In the center of Plaça de la Hispanitat the playground has a circular low level shape forming a kind of arena that can also be used as a jogging or performing area. Both spaces have fountains and their pavement is a mixture of bricks and 40x40cm concrete slabs mainly located in the perimeters of the squares, leaving the central areas with a sand floor except for Plaça de la Hispanitat’s arena which is paved with red asphalt. The concrete slabs are of 40x40cm interrupted once in a while by brick lines. The pavements and green slopes are full of trees of tilia, acacia, celtis, and shrubs such as magnolia, rosemary, thyme, lavender, oleander, salvia,

pittosporum and ivy. Some trees, hedging plants and bollards are located on the sides of the squares as protection from the vehicles.

Reaching the vertex of the triangle, on Plaça Pablo Neruda, there rests a wall limiting the square and marking the intersection between the Diagonal and Aragó. It is a sculpture-like concrete wall “*definidor de un ámbito interior y posible base de un elemento escultórico, proa y extremo de un punto donde se ha de ‘marcar’ un final*” (Febles, 1993: 120).

Another artistic element is a huge mural that lays on one of the façade buildings of Plaça de la Hispanitat. This mural was part of the “Barcelona, posa’t guapa” campaign, inaugurated in 1992, and designed by ‘CitéCréation’ who won the first competition of the games by being chosen from an international selection to do the first painted wall of Barcelona. It simulates a typical Eixample architecture in a tromp l’oeil technique depicting Pablo Picasso, Antonio Gaudi, Christopher Columbus and a total of 30 most famous figures of Catalunya.<sup>25</sup>

In 2010, the ‘Transformacion del Diagonal’ project planned by the City Council and the ‘Oficina Técnica para la Diagonal’, proposed in its two options (A and B) to convert Plaça Pablo Neruda, into a new public space of 8,289m<sup>2</sup> from which 3,353m<sup>2</sup> would be green zones. The whole area would be a vast public space replacing the road intersections and “*hacer de esta plaza un lugar para pasar, pero también para estar (...) sera un punto de encuentro y de convivencia (...) y permitirá que lo que ahora es la parte posterior de la escuela se convertía en una gran entrada principal.*”<sup>26</sup>

However, the project failed after a referendum was carried out (between May 10 and 16, 2010) in order to decide on the fate of the project and the citizens rejected it and voted against it.

25. CITÉ CRÉATION. [Accessed: 25 November 2011]. Available at: <<http://www.cite-creation.com/eng/creations.php>>

26. Noticias [online]. Ajuntament de Barcelona [Accessed: 03 January 2012]. Available at: <[http://w3.bcn.es/V01/Serveis/Noticies/V01NoticiesLlistatNoticiesCtl/0,2138,1653\\_35144087\\_2\\_1238693236,00.html?accio=detall&home=HomeBCN&nomtipusMCM=Noticia](http://w3.bcn.es/V01/Serveis/Noticies/V01NoticiesLlistatNoticiesCtl/0,2138,1653_35144087_2_1238693236,00.html?accio=detall&home=HomeBCN&nomtipusMCM=Noticia)>





Fig.49 Plaça de la Hispanitat view of the arena (left). CitéCréation's artistic façade (right)



Fig.50 Plaça Pablo Neruda view of the playground (left). The sculpture-like concrete wall at the vertex of the square (right).



