

**A jury of 21 experts has chosen the 'Gallery'  
proposal  
by the architecture studio UTE Harquitectes and  
Christ & Gantenbein**

## **A new MACBA for Barcelona**



**The extension of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona will  
be completed at the end of 2023**

► A square on three levels, an accessible urban gallery, an access passage through the transept of the MACBA Chapel are some of the proposals of the project that will allow a greater display of the Collection and create a more participatory Museum that will interact with the public space.

► 'Gallery' redefines the relationship between the Meier building, the square and the Convent dels Àngels. Respecting the project developed by Clotet and Tusquets in the eighties, the new Museum will be integrated within the context of the Raval by acknowledging the structure of courtyards and cloisters of the old convents that once characterised the neighbourhood.

The General Council of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, MACBA's highest governing body, today announced the decision of the jury of independent experts that has resolved, by a large majority, the open call for the extension of the Convent dels Àngels in favour of the 'Gallery' proposal, from the architecture studio UTE Harquitectes and Christ & Gantenbein.

After evaluating the final shortlist of five proposals, all of them of a very high standard, the jury has decided to proclaim the proposal presented under the title 'Gallery' as the winner of the open call for the drafting of the preliminary project for the expansion and reformation of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona at the Convent dels Àngels and, where applicable, the drafting services for the basic and executive project and technical assistance for managing the works at MACBA. The proposal has obtained the highest score in accordance with the evaluation criteria set by the Terms and Conditions.

In the words of the jury, **Gallery** is:

**'A proposal that neatly resolves the dialogue on three different scales:  
with the neighbourhood, the city and the Museum'**



This extension, through which the Museum will gain around 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>, responds to the challenges and objectives of MACBA's '2022 Strategy': the reorganisation and improvement of the Museum's spaces and services, which will allow a more accessible public display of the Collection; the promotion of excellence in areas of research and dissemination of knowledge; and, ultimately, the achievement of a provocative Museum in content, capable of generating narratives and debates that are open to diverse audiences. A MACBA that relates to its environment: the Raval, Barcelona, Catalonia and the world.

In this way, MACBA will be able to better deploy the full strengths of a Collection that has been in continuous growth for 25 years and which has become an international benchmark, currently holding almost 6,000 items. The much-needed expansion will allow us to exhibit a greater number of works from the permanent Collection, creating multiple narratives, while at the same time allowing the spaces of the chapel and the Convent dels Àngels to be adapted as exhibition spaces.

**GALLERY, THE PROPOSAL OF STUDIO UTE Harquitectes i Christ & Gantenbein**

\*The following documentation is extracted from the initial proposal of the winning team. This proposal is susceptible to changes at later stages of the project's development and realisation.

## 1. THE NEW MACBA AND THE CITY



### **'Syntax is more important than vocabulary' Lluís Clotet**

#### **A new syntax:**

MACBA's new extension is situated in a particularly complex context. The need to expand the Museum could easily compromise the existing buildings on the site and their history. The heritage value of the Convent dels Àngels and the subsequent interventions of Clotet-Paricio have created an environment where it is unclear how best to intervene. The answer requires a broad vision that transcends partial points of view: to build an additional layer over the existing structure that reformulates new relationships between the present ensemble, the Plaça dels Àngels and the Meier building. A new syntax for the site is required.

#### **From the Liceu to the Seminary:**

We want to situate our proposal within the context of the Raval district from the perspective of the project that Clotet and Tusquets developed in the 1980s with the aim of revitalising its central area. A project to enhance, articulate and expand the existing gaps, based on the recognition of the structure of courtyards and cloisters of the old convents that once characterised the neighbourhood. Plaça dels Àngels is the most radical and central element of this project.

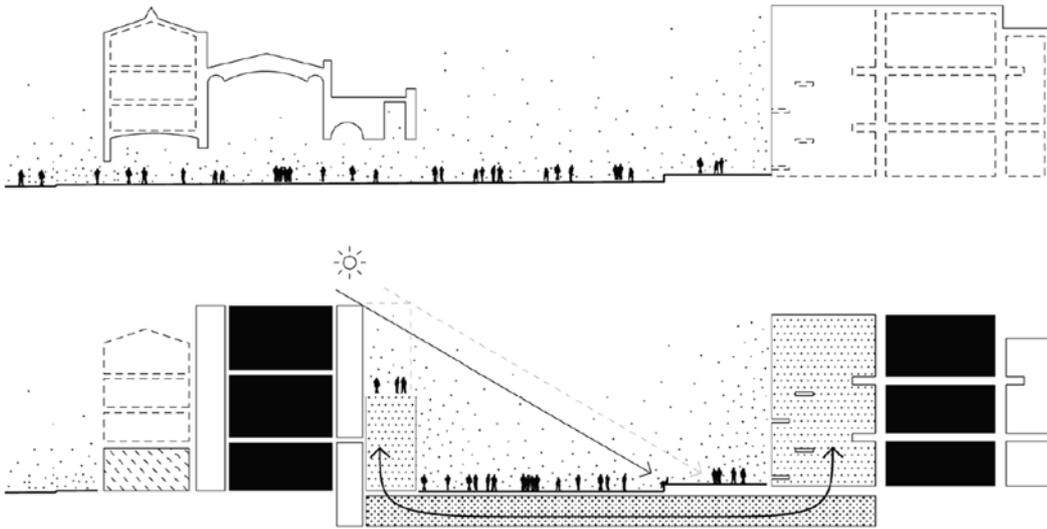
#### **Connecting the two squares:**

The access passage that currently connects Plaça dels Àngels and Plaça de les Caramelles was initially part of this project. But it is too narrow, long and residual, resulting in an urban corner of poor quality, always problematic and currently closed. The construction of the new building could actually accentuate and perpetuate this 'problem'. A more realistic and efficient alternative must be sought: one that uses the Museum itself as a public access passage from one area to the other.

#### **New entrance through the chapel:**

We are convinced that the convent's Renaissance chapel has neither the scale nor sufficient size to function as the main access to MACBA. A larger and more emblematic space is needed to ensure the necessary transition between the public space and the Museum. The convent's chapel will become the new entrance hall to the Museum, a very special space, with free access open to everyone. The door of the chapel, completely aligned with and facing Carrer Elisabets, will be the new entrance to the Museum, receiving the influx of visitors arriving from the Rambla.

## THE CHAPEL AND THE TRANSEPT



### **Access through the transept:**

We propose to take advantage of the cross floorplan of the chapel to connect Carrer Elisabets and the two squares, thus solving (in a single space) the flow of visitors envisioned by the project. By extending to ground level the existing openings in the arms of the transept, two new points of access will be created. This new access passage will only be open during Museum hours but it will offer a (public) alternative for moving between squares that is more congenial, safer and practical than the current one. The transept can become the access passage that Clotet and Tusquets envisaged.

### **The chapel: A new urban void:**

Reinterpreting the space of the chapel as a great urban void in continuity with the public space is a simple but profoundly transformative gesture. You only have to imagine its reverse – its negative – to turn it into a civic space. The dimensions, the volume of air and the typological qualities of this space correspond to those of the great civic archetypes. Spaces that are invariably halfway between a building and the street.

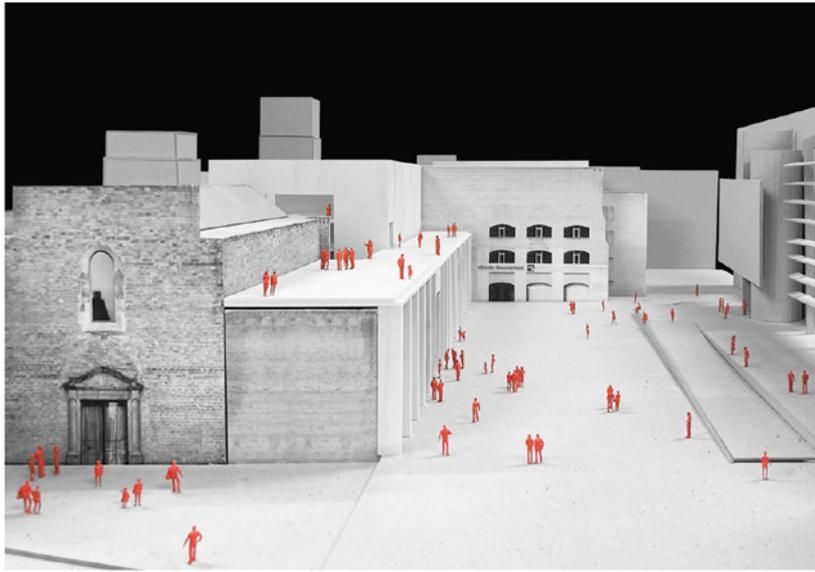
### **Moving the centre of gravity:**

The transformation of the chapel into a hall (the 'Turbine Hall' of MACBA) and urban connector gives it an additional prominence that suggests that this new entrance could become the main access to the Museum (or duplicate that of the Meier building). Concentrating the public access passage and the hall in a single space allows the centre of gravity of the Museum and the square to be moved to the chapel. A new centrality perfectly aligned to Carrer Elisabets.

### **Scale of the square – Human scale:**

With this project, the difficulty lies in finding the right scale of intervention and balancing the different elements. The scale of the heritage, the scale of the Museum, the scale of the square and the human scale. In the aspect that faces the square, instead of utilising the building's entire height, we propose to reduce the height in favour of the length by means of a low and long structure that preserves and integrates the buttresses of Clotet-Paricio. The length and permeability of this lower structure will ensure a strong link between the square and the Museum, while both relating it to the Meier building and to the scale of the square. The gallery will create an urban step in the form of a large (exhibition) terrace, lending the Museum a more domestic and affable dimension.

## SQUARE ON THREE LEVELS



### **Redefining the institution:**

The human scale of this plinth is what redefines the institution, making it more accessible and approachable. The (new) MACBA will cease to be a Museum that imposes itself and become a Museum that participates in and interacts with the public space.

### **Square on three levels:**

The new terrace above the plinth will establish a strong dialogue with the square and especially with the base of the Meier building. This is a public space that unfolds and climbs to the terrace of the Museum, in which the structure of the chapel, the new exhibition gallery and the Meier building form the backdrop of a new square on three levels. Stepping the level of the building also ensures an increase to winter sunshine entering the square.

### **Urban gallery + Art container:**

The low, porous structure qualifies and activates the square. It functions as an urban gallery that houses the Museum's shop (located in the area of the converted buttresses), the entrance through the transept and a long, glazed porch that functions as a large window through which the Museum's function as exhibition space is made evident. The apse of the chapel can be seen through the gallery from the square. Above are two taller, opaque structures: the chapel itself and the new art container that uses the full height to create three large superimposed exhibition rooms (30 x 12 x 6m).

### **Sewing with buttresses:**

All the existing buildings use structural buttresses, whose presence defines their character and identity. The repetition in different formats and materials of these buttresses unifies buildings from different historical periods. The homogeneity of these compressed mineral systems forms very unique and special spaces. We propose to build the new Museum from wall systems of large ceramic-brick buttresses that, thanks to their material and compositional strength, will sew together the different buildings into a trans-historic whole. Different materials, but the same structural and compositional logic.

## ACTIVE FAÇADE



### **Relocating the public toilets – moving 6A – lengthening the new façade:**

The public toilets will be demolished and relocated to the east end of the convent building, with independent access from the street. The area classified as 6A, which occupies the structure to be demolished, will be relocated to the front of the square, thus regularising the front façade parallel to the convent and allowing new buttresses to be constructed in front of the existent buttressed building. This simple urban compensation does not compromise the plans currently being processed and may be modified under the special plan stipulated in the competition rules.

### **Rehabilitating the buttressed building (Clotet-Paricio):**

It is important to incorporate the buttressed building into the Museum so that the entire façade facing the square is used. We propose the demolition of the middle section (which currently has no function) in order to give it the required height for a facility. We will keep the post-tensioned buttresses of the original building and reinforce them by superimposing the new façade buttresses. This operation makes it possible to place the bookshop in this space, open to the transept, while definitively consolidating the base of the new Museum as an active façade along the square.

### **MACBA white:**

Built of ceramic bricks, the buttresses of the gallery will be white faced (eastern aspect) thus linking them to the Meier building and lending them a transmutable aspect. Upon entering the square from Carrer del Àngels, a succession of white buttresses (with dynamic inscriptions using LED lights where the bricks join) momentarily transform the gallery, echoing the Meier building. In the frontal view (more in keeping with the heritage), as seen when arriving from Carrer de Ferlandina, the materiality of the traditional brick with which the whole extension is built will be maintained.

### **Great infrastructure:**

We understand the new MACBA as a coherent cultural-Museum ensemble (Meier + church, convent + extension) capable of providing a rich cultural offering and forming a new conglomerate made up of parts but conceived as a single infrastructure. The coincidence of the convent's buttresses and the strategic placement of the emergency exits will maximise the versatility of all the convent spaces, allowing for them to be transformed over time. The new MACBA will be an urban campus, a transformable cultural infrastructure.

## 2. HERITAGE



### **Heritage turned into an opportunity:**

Building next to a heritage site is often considered a 'problem' or a price to be paid that will condition the new building. We propose turning difficulty into virtue by transforming the pre-existing heritage elements into an essential part of the project and the (new) Museum. Strengthening its representative character, the chapel, the apse and the façade of the old convent will become central points and, above all, the characteristics of the new Museum. Adding a new structure that extends the nature of the existing one, without denying or hiding the original building, and making the most of its value. A 'problem' turned into an essential part of the (new) Museum.

### **Adding or growing:**

The extension will be integrated into the pre-existing ensemble, inheriting certain constructive, compositional and volumetric logics. A new entity will be created made up of parts from different periods but with a single, and continuous, tectonic logic. Rather than being an addition, the extension will enable what is already there to grow. A revised prolongation based on the logics of the original. The new MACBA cannot be understood without the convent, the chapel and the 'buttressed' building of Clotet-Paricio.

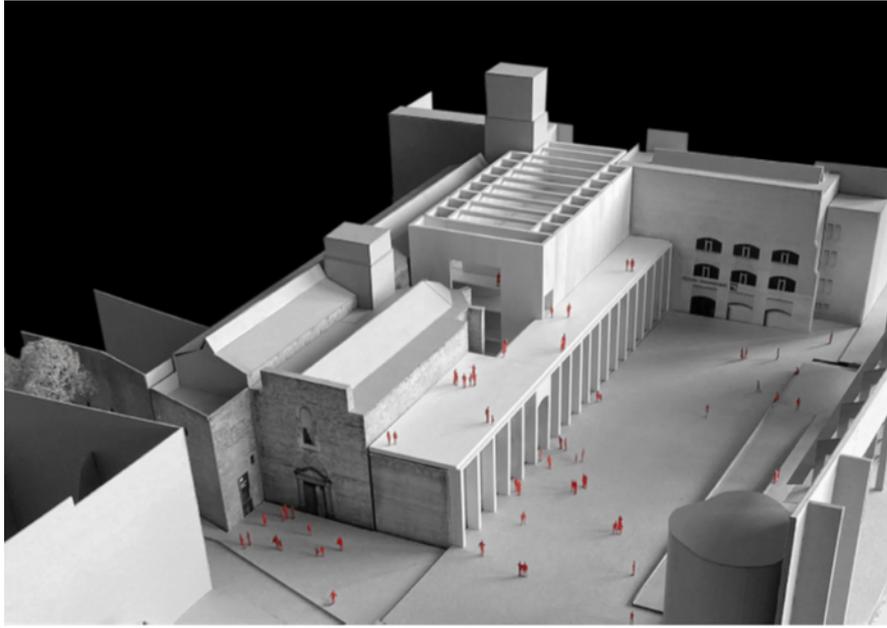
### **Contemporary tradition:**

Instead of creating an exempt and deliberately different object, instead of timidly setting aside heritage, we propose to act in accordance with what has been done throughout history: adding to the existing, and evolving the same typologies and constructive logics. Revising and reviving tradition in each intervention. The contemporary version of a legacy.

### **Courtyard of the apse:**

The apse is the most expressive piece of the whole. The entire project revolves around a small cloister. A glazed outdoor courtyard surrounded by passageways and the main staircase, ensuring maximum visibility of this unique piece. Its central position in the whole ensemble and the view from the square give it maximum prominence. The new MACBA would not be what it is without the apse of the Capella de la Mare de Déu dels Àngels.

## ADD OR GROW



### **Rooms between buttresses: The façade of the convent**

The space between the large exhibition rooms and the façade of the convent is very much conditioned by the original buttresses. We propose to turn these elements into the most special and essential spaces of the Museum. We will complement the existing buttresses with new ceramic-brick buttresses (superimposed on the existing ones but with a different materiality) creating small, very high exhibition spaces with overhead light. Extraordinary and intense spaces for installing very unique pieces. The overhead light and the verticality of the spaces will emphasise the heritage, monumentalising it and offering a transcendent experience. A unique space to exhibit unique pieces.

### **The chapel:**

This will be the main space of the Museum. A new access and exhibition area. The most accessible and visited space in the new Museum. We propose to open the transept to the two squares, preserving the existing ceramic lattice holes. On the other hand, we propose to eliminate some of the interventions of the Clotet-Paricio project that, in our opinion, distort the original spirit of the chapel, and to recuperate its more basic and austere image.

### **Restoration criteria:**

We aim to restore in more detail the unique elements (chapel door, windows, etc.) and to rehabilitate the damaged finishes of the wall surfaces. Wherever possible (for example in the chapel), original walls and spatial configurations that have been altered during previous architectural interventions will be restored.

### 3. THE MUSEUM



#### **The church as the main access:**

Access to the new extension of MACBA will be through the Església dels Àngels, accessed through its main door or from the Plaça dels Àngels or through the transept. The central nave of the church will be the reception and security area, and one of the entrances to the MACBA campus. The Renaissance nave will house the cloakroom services, while the side annex that housed the public toilets will be integrated into the whole of the buttressed façade and will include the bookshop.

#### **The gallery, exhibition and façade:**

To the south, the transept connects the church with the rest of the ground floor of the convent and with a new exhibition courtyard beyond its façade in Plaça de les Caramelles. To the north, the transept connects with the new gallery in Plaça dels Àngels. The gallery is an iconic (and changing?) exhibition space lending its image to the city, and together with the main structure, it creates a courtyard around the apse. Above the gallery and side chapels is a large terrace with open-air sculptures, also visible from the square.

#### **Three exhibition rooms of 31x12m:**

The main exhibition space houses three rooms of 31 x 12m with a height of 5.5m on the ground floor and 7m elsewhere. These are fully equipped and neutral spaces purposely designed for exhibitions. The room under the roof will have the option of using natural light.

#### **The side rooms formed by the buttresses:**

On either side of the large rooms, interstices between buttresses become small spaces of double height or more. They provide very special exhibition conditions (some have overhead light), and are intended for unique works and audiovisual installations.

## JURY, PROCESS AND EVALUATION

The jury of the open call for projects for the preliminary drafting of the expansion and reformation of the Museum in the Convent dels Àngels is made up of representatives of all the members of the Consortium: Barcelona City Council, the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Ministry of Culture and the Fundació MACBA, as well as representatives of the Museum and members of the College of Architects of Catalonia:

- President: Joan Subirats, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona City Council
- Jury members:
- Àngels Ponsa i Roca, Culture Councillor of the Generalitat de Catalunya Sra. Elsa Ibar, by delegation
  - Elsa Ibar, Director General of Cultural Heritage of the Generalitat de Catalunya
  - Laia Grau Balagueró, Urban Planning Manager of Barcelona City Council
  - Xavier Matilla, Head of Architecture at Barcelona City Council
  - Marc Aureli Santos, Director of Urban Architecture and Heritage Services of the Deputy Management of Urban Planning of Barcelona City Council
  - Jordi Rabassa Massons, Councillor of the Ciutat Vella District
  - Santiago Ibarra Oriol, Councillor of the Ciutat Vella District, by delegation
  - Javier García Fernández, Secretary General of Culture of the Ministry of Culture
  - Àngel Luis Sousa Seibane, by delegation
  - Àngel Luis Sousa Seibane, Architect of the General Directorate of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Culture
  - Ainhoa Grandes, President of the Fundació MACBA
  - Jordi Ros, Architect of the Fundació MACBA
  - Ferran Barenblit, Director of MACBA
  - Isabel Bachs, Head of Architecture at MACBA
  - Claudi Aguiló i Aran, Architect of the COAC
  - Marta Peris Eugenio, Architect of the COAC
  - Maria-Roser Amadó i Cercós, Architect of the COAC
  - Joan Forgas i Coll, Architect of the COAC
  - Josep Miàs i Gifré, Architect of the COAC
  - Núria Salvadó i Aragonès, Architect of the COAC
  - Joan Roig i Duran, Architect of the COAC

Secretary: Josep M. Carreté, Manager of MACBA

Through the individual assessments of its members, after having studied the documentation submitted by the different teams participating in phase 1 of the open call, and after the decision having been agreed and approved by a large majority, the jury announced on 22 December 2020 that the **FINALISTS** selected were as follows:

Estudio Barozzi Veiga, SLP

UTE Camps Felip Arquitectura, SLP, and Tuñón Arquitectos, SLP

UTE Harquitectes and Christ & Gantenbein

UTE David Chipperfield Architects and b720 Architecture

UTE Caruso St John Architects, LLP, and Bosch - Capdeferro

The Consortium of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) then invited those selected to move on to phase 2, so that, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the open call, they could submit their titled proposals anonymously. After receiving the preliminary studies from these five selected architectural studios, in this second stage the

jury decided by a substantial majority that the 'Gallery' proposal would be the winner. On 14 April 2021, the public opening of the envelopes took place in order to reveal the identity of the winner and it was resolved that MACBA will commission the drafting of the project to extend the Museum to UTE Harquitectes and Christ & Gantenbein.

**EVALUATIONS:** The jury highlights the following aspects of the winning proposal:

-The project proposes the extension of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in front of the Convent dels Àngels in order to resolve the lack of exhibition space and to solve, at the same time, the relations between the different existing buildings. This solution proposes that the convent's church become a meeting space, transforming its use into the central element that articulates public circulation on the ground floor of the ensemble. The configuration of a new transept in this space resolves the issue of the main entrance of the ensemble and provides a fresh answer to Tusquets and Clotet's 1980 Plan, 'From the Liceu to the Seminary', relocating the access passage between the Plaça dels Àngels and the Plaça de les Caramelles to the centre of the building.

-The 'Gallery' proposal offers a façade onto the Plaça dels Àngels that is unifying and transparent enough such that the heritage elements of the apse of the church can be perceived from the square. It gives a coherent image to the whole with a rhythm of buttresses of ceramic bricks built in front of the existing buttresses of Clotet and Paricio's intervention, and extending them to the building that encloses the square in its western sector. This action creates the appearance of a lower space in the porch that faces the square, maintaining appropriate proportions to its environment and holding back the main body of the exhibition rooms themselves, as a large scenic box that houses the different exhibition configurations and their associated services. The appearance of this lower space facilitates sunlight entering the square and creates on its roof a new terrace capable of accommodating all kinds of public activities, thus complementing the square by the addition of a new level.

-The project offers a series of circular routes within the extension that facilitate the necessary connections both with the Meier building, through the actions in the basement and in relation to the whole of the Convent dels Àngels, through the coinciding levels, while respecting the values of the existing heritage buildings, and integrating them within the formalisation of the exhibition spaces. At this point the jury is aware that the proposal requires the resolution of the adaptation of the plan to the proposed alignments and of the intervention in the buttresses of the Gothic nave.

-The description of the construction systems used in the ensemble (the combination of construction systems with inertia and elements of thermal capture and ventilation) allows a positive assessment of the passive operation of the building.



### **Gallery**

Extension project MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona  
Barcelona, 14 April 2021

Total cost of the work, Gallery proposal: 5,445,613.86€  
Expected completion date: end of 2023

