

history capsule

A TOUR CASA PAGÈS THROUGH THE WORK OF JOAN DURAN THE PROVOCATION OF SURREALISM

El Pa Volador is a unique architectural complex in the region, with exceptional features. It currently houses a market-cuisine restaurant that also offers a banquet hall.

The main building, the Pagès farmhouse, built in 1577, in ashlar stone, is listed among the classic examples of traditional Catalan architecture, featuring elements ranging from Romanesque to Gothic, though formally belonging to the late Gothic period. The ground floor preserves the structure of the old farmhouses; the first floor, however, had practically disappeared by the time the building was restored, in the 90s of the twentieth century. This allowed for a comprehensive and highly creative reconstruction of the first floor. This reconstruction resulted in themed rooms inspired partly by the excesses of the Baroque, partly by the aesthetics of neoclassical modernism, and also by the dreamlike surrealism of Figueres' universal genius, Salvador Dalí. In this sense, the Dalí Room stands out in particular, reproducing the sky of the Costa Brava and paying homage to its winds, with lighting elements inspired by modernist goldsmithing.

The ornamental abundance and the deliberate dissonance of styles are among the visual hallmarks of El Pa Volador complex.

Other curiosities of the facilities:

- El Palau dels Vents, a banquet hall the size of a handball court, in the shape of a Greek temple, bordered by a set of 30 fluted columns, pediments and friezes, lit from above by a central skylight. And an interior that is also spectacular, with marble floors, interior columns and glass walls on the outside.
- the Avinyó farmhouse, at the back of the current complex, a late-Gothic farmhouse listed as a Cultural Asset of Local Interest and included in Catalonia's

Architectural Heritage Catalogue. Above the main entrance portal there are three semicircular arches, with sardine brick, which give rise to a terrace. It was owned by the Marquis of Camps and later converted into a public school during the Franco regime

- The garden, a French-inspired garden defined by order and symmetry: a central decorative fountain, straight paths, long perspectives, precise topiary, statues, staircases and balustrades—an intimate echo of the design principles behind the gardens of Versailles, which pursued the classic idea that human beings dominate nature through reason and geometry

THE DALÍ IMPRINT AND THE FIRST SHADOW OF ANICET DE PAGÈS

The architectural transformation of El Pa Volador was a monumental project of the late 20th century. The architect was the hotelier from Figueres Joan Duran i Simón (Hotel President), businessman, patron, great admirer of Dalí's work and owner of one of the most outstanding private collections of the genius of surrealism.

Joan Duran undertook a deeply personal project, with the boldness and clarity of vision characteristic of great artists. The result of this is a Pa Volador that exhibits innumerable references to Dalí surrealism, the most outstanding of which is the main façade, adorned with numerous three-pointed loaves with wings, (hence the name of the architectural complex, El Pa Volador, *the Flying Bread*). This three-pointed loaf, known as Dalí Bread, is one of the emblematic motifs in Dalí's work: in 1970, Dalí decided to cover the façade of the Galatea Tower of his theatre-museum, with 3-pointed bread, and several images of the artist wearing a three-pointed loaf as a hat have become iconic: perhaps the most iconic of these portraits is one from 1961, while attending a bullfight in Figueres.

Along with the winged loaves, the large egg on the roof, the main symbol of Dalí's work, also stands out. The egg crowns the highest point of the Casa Pagès farmhouse, at the apex of the 2 waters of the roof.

Inside, surrealism is the exuberant and eclectic mixture of decorative arts that draw from multiple sources (modernism, neoclassicism, baroque, Renaissance Gothic, rural Romanesque and Mozarabic expressions) with winks at dreamlike surrealism where everything has a place: such as the ceiling of the cellar furrowed with twisted ceramic vine branches (today converted into one of the most inspiring rooms of the open-daily restaurant) or the ceiling of the outbuilding adjacent to the old kitchen of the farmhouse, which is covered with snails.

Apart from this more contemporary Dalinian phylia, the main farmhouse was the birthplace of the

Catalan romantic poet Anicet de Pagès i de Puig (1843-1902), heir to a family that owned agricultural holdings which were taken over by industrial activity in the mid-twentieth century. XIX. This shift gradually transformed the de Pagès family into a bourgeois household and little by little it and distanced it from its rural origins. In addition to this, Anicet de Pagès, like his fellow artists with an artist's soul, decided to live in a bohemian way closer to the big cities (Barcelona and Madrid). The poet was one of the outstanding literary firms of the time, a regular participant in the Barcelona literary contest, the Jocs Florals.

The progressive abandonment of ethno-rural origins meant the beginning of the end of the farmhouse as an agrarian structure and mainstay of the territory. Successive sales brought it into the hands of Joan Duran, the conceptual author of the recovery and reconceptualization of the farmhouse and the lands that were once part of the agrarian domain.

Today, El Pa Volador is above all a work of art inspired by Dalí's universe which houses a restaurant serving market cuisine. The restoration of Casa Pagès is an exhibition in equal parts of aesthetic ostentation and elements of undoubted architectural value. This free-spirited and uninhibited character resonates with the personality of a region that has been able to pay tribute to the genius of the personalities of universal recognition (Dalí, Pla or Monturiol) born in the Empordà.

As Joan Duran said in an interview published in 1995: "Dalí wanted the whole Empordà to participate in surrealism, for the entire region to be tinged with his style, and I do my part."