



THE SAJ.
URBAN CHAPEL OF ST. IGNATIUS

This urban chapel of St Ignatius (The SaJ) is situated in a miraculously free centric backyard in the Urban Center of Pamplona, Spain.

The designated location is limited to a small patio which shares the rear facades of the school and the church where along with housing the foreseen uses, it aspires to correct the link between the preexisting buildings whose internal circulation was limited by architectural barriers.



The building consists of a chapel and auditorium which are superimposed with shared facilities.

The high level of demand for acoustics according to use demanded that the constructions were structurally independent.

For this purpose a series of wooden structure tie rods aligned with the chapel wooden frame pick up the floor of the auditorium, raising its weight to the exterior armored concrete; while the 7 wooden wood frames which cover the chapel lower their weight directly to the foundation.



The available patio offered space enough for bones and muscle, and forced a crude architecture where the construction had to be distilled and entwined in the space, giving support, isolation and redress, while illuminating and humanizing the place.

The definition of the building section manages to create a natural and comfortable ambiance; the abundant natural light permits the use of the chapel without need of electricity during the day and even in the summer it does not need air conditioning.

This small chapel is used for daily mass services; and its size complements the bigger school church, better oriented for crowded weekend celebrations. It is a sheltered place for those who want to pray, participate in the religious services or contemplate the mystery in front of the Tabernacle.

The transition from the outside busy road to the interior quiet place is shaped by a repetitive structure defined by a series of wood frames organized in a crescendo order towards a wide and transparent opening to the sky.

There is a subtle symbolic allegory within the chapel, which is developed by the following themes:

One; above all and everything, a unique opening which provides the only source of direct light and views. It represents God's presence, through the ancient, yet actual, symbolic meaning given to light in the Bible.



One, again; bright and only rounded shape, the Tabernacle presides the scene and forms an three dimensional triangle relation due to its position: in front of the Virgin Mary statue, under the only opening mentioned above.

The position height of the Tabernacle is symbolically placed between “heaven and earth”, half buried, half above the exterior ground level, as can be perceived in the longitudinal section, taking advantage of the natural landscape. The design of the Tabernacle introduced a way to change the colour of the alabaster stone disc in order to accommodate it to the liturgical seasons.



Three; above the entrance, three big mirrors of equal size and shape, placed together to form one unity that represents the Holy Trinity; in front of the celebrating priest who is reminded that his role during the celebration is a reflection and one with Him.

Three again; three bright elements complete the liturgical furnishing: the tabernacle, the altar and the ambo are provided by their own source of light.

Four: the four Evangelists. We help to remember them by placing four stone slabs creating the podium, on which the priest stands with the altar in front of the assembly during the celebrations.

Seven; this is the principal gesture that shapes the project, and represents the embrace, and its number help us introduce the concept of the seven sacraments in the chapel; the seven wood frames are fused with the benches prolonging themselves as where the embrace hold and touches us.

Twelve; climbing towards the highest point, twelve indirect light openings follow a pattern rhythmically inclined towards a vanishing point under the only source of direct light. It represents the enlightenment brought through the twelve apostles.

A real scale Virgin Mary sculpture, placed on the floor, welcomes and accompanies all those who come in, with its praying and contemplating attitude.

Another symbolism is represented by the nature of the materials used inside. All of them are presented natural and raw. No paint was used anywhere in this chapel.