

Casa Grande

The Casa Grande was built as a residence, attached to buildings on both sides, after Eduardo Gutiérrez Cedrún commissioned the Leon architect Francisco de la Pezuela y Ramírez, who won the Third Architecture Medal at the 1908 National Fine Art Exhibition for this project. The construction was completed in 1910.

This is a typical upper middle class home with a style intended to suit its site in the historic quarter: its appearance is reminiscent of a medieval fortified house of granite masonry, with battlements and two flanking sections in the likeness of towers. Granting it a certain eclecticism, there is also reference to the Cantabrian origin of the patron in the overhanging eaves and even some modernist elements.

The residence is sited on a slope and so the rear has double the number of floors. Its main *façade* has a solid, monumental appearance, laid out in a U shape, which contrasts with the lightness of the stairs, window openings and balconies of the rear *façade*. Both the diversity of window types and the rhythms and harmonies of the fenestration give the building a distinctive, eclectic air. The different rooms of the building are laid out around an open central courtyard, which recreates the memory of the city's old mansion houses.

However, the original home —first planned in 1905— was transformed a number of times throughout its history (the masonry floor was removed and the ceramic in the entrance hall was replaced with stone) to adapt it to day-to-day family needs or to alter it for other uses. It is worth highlighting the thorough refurbishment carried out in 1952, when the baluster windows on the bottom floor of the courtyard were turned into doorways with stairways, and new imitation-wood coffered ceilings made of plaster were put in. At this time, the neo-Gothic chapel was moved from the main floor to the place occupied by the porter on the bottom floor and neo-Gothic plasterwork decoration was added. In 1977, more alterations were made, particularly to the rear *façade*, when the upper iron and glass balcony was destroyed. This change, together with the removal of the original stairway, distorted the outline of the rear of the building. This process of alteration and addition continued after the Casa Grande was acquired by the University of Extremadura and new functions were required of it (IT and Public Works School, administration services of the university chancellor's office).

Before the inauguration of the Visual Arts Centre, on 3 June 2010, it was thoroughly restored by the renowned architects Emilio Tuñón and Luis M. Mansilla. This work involved everything from the cleaning of non-original elements to the building's consolidation, restoration and adaptation to its new museum functions. The criteria involved in this architectural intervention have been to reconcile consideration for the original building with its requirements as an exhibition centre, offering neutral spaces that allow exhibition while also respecting the museographic need to conserve the artworks.

Temporarily, and until the new building has been constructed, the Casa Grande will essentially have an exhibition function. It is intended to later house the Visual Art Centre's administrative services and visitor services such as the reception, the documentation centre and the workshop area. Gallery areas will also be maintained.

Technical Sheet

Architects

Tuñón + Mansilla Arquitectos

Collaborators

Matilde Peralta, Carlos Martínez de Albornoz, Ana del Arenal, María Langarita, Anna Partenheimer, Jorge Ruiz Boluda, Arabella Masson, Marceline Ruckstuhl, Sara Murado, Mila Moskalenko, Marta Renom, David Orkan y Andrés Regueiro.

Installations engineer

J.G.

Structural engineer

Alfonso Gómez Gaité

Architectural technicians

Fernando Benito Fernández Cabello y Santiago Hernán Martín

Surfaces

Total

Casa Grande

Built area: 2.900 m²

Casa Grande

Floor level +439.68

Entrance hall	33.8 m ²
Passageway	37.3 m ²
Stairs	17.9 m ²
Storage	65.1 m ²
Freight lift	11.5 m ²
Plant	134.0 m ²

Floor level +433.32

Passageway	107.7 m ²
Library	154.3 m ²
Stairs	32.5 m ²
WC	5.6 m ²
Deposit	35.6 m ²
Changing rooms	23.0 m ²
Changing room courtyard	11.0 m ²
Plant	117.4 m ²
Plant courtyard	12.5 m ²
Storeroom	25.8 m ²

Floor level +447.64

Entrance hall	54.5 m ²
Multipurpose room	163.8 m ²
Passageway	102.7 m ²
Stairs	55.8 m ²
WCs	7.7 m ²
Administration	134.1 m ²
Plant	22.7 m ²
Plant courtyard	13.6 m ²

Floor level +451.88

Passageway	113.1 m ²
Exhibition galleries	349.0 m ²
WCs	6.1 m ²
Stairs	12.2 m ²
Plant	9.9 m ²

Floor level +456.26

Workshops	57.1 m ²
Plant	450.0 m ²