

DESIGN INNOVATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL

MONITOR

October

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.D/ 14.95 EURO .I/ 14.95 EURO .F/ 15.95 EURO .UK/ 12.00 GBP





Barcelona's Biomedical Research Park, an elliptical structure open towards the sea, is surrounded by a whole number of singular buildings: the two towers of the Villa Olímpica hotel, the recently completed Gas Natural headquarters by Enric Miralles/Benedetta Tagliabue, the «monoblock» tower of the Hospital del Mar, Frank Gehry's Fish Sculpture, and a sports complex in the process of renovation. Designing the BMP, architects Manel Brullet and Albert de Pineda — also the authors of the Hospital del Mar extension — adopted a strategy of implanting it in the context in a way that, instead of competing with its neighbours, the new building would engage in a formal dialogue with all of them. The BMP rests on a grand platform topped by a truncated cone with a cutout that reveals the complex internal structure. The elliptical form of the cone was born from the necessity to reconcile the large-scale building with its irregularly shaped site and with the highly diverse volumes of the adjacent buildings. The BMP's set-back form is coordinated with the relatively low-rise construction along this part of the seafront, yet at the same time its mass increases towards the city, thus accommodating all the square metres required by the brief. Moreover, the stepped structure maximizes the efficiency of solar panels incorporated in the building's roof to produce hot water and electricity. Behind the elliptical enclosure, the building is organized around a void and a suspended rectangular mirror pool: here, the architects create a different reality, independent from its surroundings, with generously provided views towards the sea, and with the even distribution of sunlight among the interior spaces. The almost transparent outer facade is made out of wood and does not touch the ground — a solution that helps visually lighten the overall volume and serves as a gigantic sun blind.