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ARTICLE



Travelling Abroad to Understand Australia: Glenn Murcutt's Look at the Architecture of José Antonio Coderch

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the impact on Glenn Murcutt's architecture of his 1973 meeting in Barcelona with José Antonio Coderch (1913–1984), one of the most internationally celebrated Spanish architects of the twentieth century. It uncovers details about their initial meeting and explores buildings designed by Coderch that Murcutt visited in person. The paper then analyses the impact of this meeting on Murcutt's architecture by comparing two houses: The Laurie Short House (Sydney, 1974), designed immediately before the 1973 trip and finished upon Murcutt's return to Australia, and the Marie Short House (Kempsey, 1975). The study of Coderch's work transformed Murcutt in three basic ways: it facilitated his shift away from the archetypal glass pavilion, it spurred Murcutt's development of continuous interior/exterior spaces and it taught him to exploit vertical sun-shading devices and various shutter configurations that are characteristic of both traditional Mediterranean architecture and Coderch's work. From Coderch, Murcutt learned to connect contemporary architecture with the tradition of the place, both physically and symbolically. Meeting Coderch, and visiting his works in person, became a turning point in Murcutt's career and it reveals crucial links between Spanish and Australian architecture.

Although Catalan architect José Antonio Coderch (1913–1984) and Australian architect Glenn Murcutt (b. 1936) belong to different generations, cultural contexts and hemispheres, both worked with and from the place in its physical and symbolic aspects, and they established connections between tradition and modernity, and between past and present. Despite the obvious geographic and cultural separation of their native lands, these similarities result from the 1973 meeting in Spain between the young Murcutt, then in his thirties, with the elder, and more internationally-recognised Coderch, then aged sixty.¹ Murcutt has cited this meeting on numerous occasions, from monographs

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about his work published in 1985 and 1999, his Pritzker Prize acceptance speech in 2002 and in more recent interviews.² Murcutt has never explained the origin of his interest in Coderch, but he did state that “José Antonio Coderch was fundamental in my professional life.”³

Along with Coderch, Murcutt also studied other internationally famous architects. Murcutt’s career has always revealed the influence of a diverse array of architects, some of whose work he had already begun to investigate prior to beginning his university studies, such as the Farnsworth House by Mies van der Rohe and the work of “the Greene brothers, Wright, Maybeck, Irving Gill, The Keck brothers, Philip Johnson, the Weese brothers, Elliot Noyes, Craig Ellwood, Charles and Ray Eames, Schindler, Gordon Drake and a number of other luminaries from the U.S.”⁴ This list reveals the special attention Murcutt paid to California. His initial exposure to Californian architecture came as a young child through journals such as *Architectural Forum*, which his father purchased for him. These journals gave Murcutt a glimpse of sources that later became constant references in his own work. As a follower of Mies van der Rohe, Ellwood’s work especially impressed Murcutt and inspired him to create his own style by overcoming the archetype of the glass pavilion.

Murcutt expanded his knowledge of international architecture beyond North America when, following his graduation and marriage, he spent nearly two years (1962–1964) travelling throughout Europe. During this period, he based himself in London and worked in the office of Ian Fraser, but he also took advantage of this location to travel extensively throughout the continent. In 1963, he travelled to Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia and France, and in 1964 to Poland, Finland, Denmark and Sweden. In these travels, he studied the relationship between architectural form and the conditions of the place, all aspects which he noted in multiple locations across the continent, but especially in the vernacular houses on Mykonos, Greece. His visits to Alvar Aalto’s work also taught him to appreciate the intrinsic relationship between architecture and landscape.⁵

Upon returning to Australia in 1964, Murcutt worked for five years for the firm Ancher, Mortlock, Murray and Woolley, and then in 1969 he left this firm to establish his own studio. In 1973 Murcutt travelled again to Europe, but this time he also visited locations in North America and Mexico. Undoubtedly, although separated by a decade, both journeys through Europe affected his professional career, but the 1973 trip had a deeper impact on his architectural work. On this second journey, Murcutt began to search for architectural forms that respond “to the physical and cultural settings of his buildings without the intervention of some *a priori* aesthetic”.⁶ He was looking for architecture that revealed the values of the place and the vernacular, but that also was consistent with the Modern Movement.

The Gray-Mulroney Award, which he received for the addition to his own home in Mosman (New South Wales, 1969), funded the 1973 trip, and this

journey marked a watershed moment in his architecture.⁷ From 2 September through 15 December he travelled to Mexico City, and then ventured north to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Toronto, Boston and New York. In Los Angeles Murcutt met Craig Ellwood, and visited with him Ellwood's Daphne House (1961), Rosen House (1961) and the Airport Business Center (1971). In Chicago, he toured Mies van der Rohe's campus for the Illinois Institute of Technology and paid particular attention to the IIT Chapel (1952) and Crown Hall (1956). His Chicago itinerary also included Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House (1910) and Bertrand Goldberg's Marina City Towers (1963), as well as a side journey north to Racine, Wisconsin, to visit Wright's Johnson Wax Building (1939). In Toronto, he was impressed by I.M. Pei's Canadian Imperial Bank of the Commerce (1973).

From New York, where Murcutt did not visit any building which he has subsequently mentioned, he flew to Europe, travelling through Great Britain, Scotland, Spain, France, Sardinia, Italy, Germany and Greece. In Great Britain, he toured the Cotswolds, a picturesque area of villages in the central England, and Scotland. In Paris, he visited Pierre Chareau's and Bernard Bijvoet's Maison de Verre in Paris (1932). While Murcutt often referenced this building in his work, on his previous visit to Paris he was only able (for unknown reasons) to see the building from the exterior, but in 1973 he saw it inside and out.⁸ From Paris he travelled to Italy with stops in Sardinia, Rome and Milan, and then back to London. From London he travelled to Berlin, where to his disappointment he was unable to tour Mies van der Rohe's Neuenationalgalerie. Finally, Murcutt ended his European itinerary with a repeat visit to Mikonos.⁹

In Spain, he visited Barcelona and met Coderch, and on his return trip to Paris Murcutt stopped in the Catalonian towns of Cadaqués and Espolla to study in person a few of the Catalonian architect's most important works. Coderch was a key figure in twentieth-century Spanish architecture, and he was one of Spain's most internationally recognised architects. He earned his professional registration immediately after the Spanish Civil War (1936--1939) and collaborated with the architect Manuel Valls (1912--2000) until 1960. Despite the imposed national style that characterised the early years of the Franco regime, even as early as the late 1940s, Coderch's work incorporated modern ideas into Spanish architecture thanks to his reinterpretation of the Catalonian vernacular and a special sensitivity to place using local materials. As Kenneth Frampton noted, Coderch's work reveals "on the one hand, an engagement with the liberative space-form of the avant-garde, on the other, a profound respect for the role of tradition in architectural culture".¹⁰ In Coderch's own words: "At a time when Spain was practically isolated from any outside influence, it was regional architecture that guided me in my work and allowed me to carry out works that were later considered modern."¹¹

Among those of his generation, Coderch was one of the first Spaniards to be recognised internationally during the early years of Franco's regressive, isolationist regime. Beginning in 1949, Gio Ponti featured Coderch's work regularly in *Domus*, and his work also appeared in other international journals including *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (France), *Forum* (Netherlands), *Zodiac* (Italy) and *Architectural Design* (United Kingdom), among others.¹² In 1951, Coderch won the Gold Medal for his Spanish Pavilion in the ninth Triennale di Milano and in 1959 Josep Lluís Sert connected him to Team X. Coderch participated actively in the group by presenting his buildings in their meetings.¹³ In 1971, the Swiss journal *Architecture: formes et fonctions* published an issue titled "The ideas"; in an attempt to survey the current contemporary cultural scene, the journal interviewed a select group of architects, artists and critics, and illustrated the interviews with photographs of their work.¹⁴ In this issue, Coderch's work appeared alongside that of the Australian Harry Seidler, among other architects. It is possible, though unconfirmed, that Murcutt's first exposure to Coderch's work came through one of these publications.

Because of its unique approach to traditional Mediterranean architecture and its intrinsic link with the place, Coderch's work made valuable contributions to Spanish architecture, especially during the difficult years immediately following the Civil War.¹⁵ During this time of extreme nationalism and isolation on the global stage, Coderch found ways to fuse modern ideas with traditional values, and this fusion characterised his work until his death in 1984. Murcutt took note of this fusion and studied Coderch's capacity to infuse modern architecture with physical, cultural and symbolic elements that are native to the region.

Years later, meeting Coderch and seeing his work in person showed Murcutt that it is not necessary to renounce modernity in order to work fluidly with the idiosyncrasies of the region. In Murcutt's words, the encounter gave him "a vernacular accent which he took care to harmonise with the quality of Australian places."¹⁶ He learned this lesson at a critical time in which Australia was questioning its own identity.¹⁷ In Coderch, Murcutt discovered a solution that he could not have found in Ellwood. While in California, Murcutt directly questioned Ellwood about his strategies of addressing climate, and Ellwood responded unequivocally that he relied on air conditioning.¹⁸ Ellwood's total confidence in the most up-to-date active cooling technology, especially at the height of the oil crisis, disconcerted Murcutt. He later declared that "I cannot pursue architecture that does not deal in very clear terms of place, culture, technology, climate and all of those things that I believe are vitally important".¹⁹ In contrast, Coderch's passive strategies linked directly to the local setting and simultaneously reflected the ideals of modern architecture. From Coderch, Murcutt learned to value vernacular architecture and to heed the landscape and the geographic and cultural qualities of the place. Moreover, Coderch developed intermediate spaces that mediated scale between interior and exterior, and he attempted to conserve the earth's natural resources.

To demonstrate that Coderch is an important reference in Murcutt's work, this paper consults published monographs, scientific articles, interviews and lectures given by Murcutt.²⁰ Philip Drew, who wrote extensively about Murcutt's travel journal, is also an essential source.²¹ It also consults the Coderch Archive in Madrid, the Historical Archive of the Architects' Association of Catalonia, the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney and the University of Texas Library.²² Collectively, these sources reveal three essential ways Murcutt's encounter with Coderch transformed his own work: Murcutt abandoned the typology of the standalone glass pavilion that had characterised his work prior to meeting Coderch, he transformed interior/exterior spaces into places for living, and he exploited vertical sun control devices that are typical in Spain's Mediterranean climate. Two houses clearly reflect this transformation: The Laurie Short House (Sydney, 1974), designed immediately before Murcutt visited Coderch, and the Marie Short House (Kempsey, 1975), designed and built upon his return to Australia. By exploring his impact on Murcutt's work, this paper also reevaluates Coderch as an international figure and presents this relationship as a fundamental link between the Iberian Peninsula and Australia.

Murcutt Meets Coderch in Barcelona in 1973

During his brief visit to Catalonia, Murcutt spent two days in Barcelona, where he met Coderch, and may have visited Coderch's Casa Ugalde in nearby Caldes d'Estrac. On route from Barcelona to Paris, he travelled north to Espolla, stopping briefly in the coastal village of Cadaqués along the way. He also visited two other places: Ordesa National Park in the Spanish Pyrenees and Cordes, a French village located north of Toulouse.²³

Drew's 1999 monograph on Murcutt's work dedicates two pages to this encounter, a text written in the first person, titled "Spain: meeting Coderch".²⁴ Although over a quarter-century had passed, Murcutt vividly remembered that the meeting happened in Barcelona on 9 November 1973, and he explained that Coderch "gave me a day of his time, took me around and showed me some of his buildings."²⁵ Murcutt did not cite any specific buildings (Table 1 lists all Coderch buildings in Barcelona that were finished prior to 1973), yet he accompanied this quote with a photo of the façade of Coderch's housing project on Johann Sebastian Bach Street in Barcelona. Coderch featured in the national and international context since the early 1950s with buildings such as the housing development "La Barceloneta" (1954), and continued to work until the early 1980s. Thus, most of the buildings that Murcutt visited would have been built in the 1950s, with the exception of some contemporary examples such as the Housing Banco Urquijo (1972).

In the 1985 monograph, Murcutt recalled his visit to Cadaqués, a well-known international meeting point for artists and intellectuals.²⁶ With several buildings

Year	Authors	Building in Barcelona city
1954	J.A. Coderch and M. Valls	Housing "La Barceloneta"
1960	J.A. Coderch and M. Valls	Housing for Sailors, Grupo Almirante Cervera
1960	J.A. Coderch and M. Valls	Housing "Johann Sebastian Bach"
1961	J.M. Soterias Mauri. Extension by J.A. Coderch	Extension of Luminor Building
1963	J.A. Coderch and M. Valls	Tàpies House
1965	J.A. Coderch and M. Valls	Luque House
1968	J.A. Coderch and M. Valls	Trade Buildings
1971?	G. Coderch, J.A. Coderch and J.A. Coderch Giménez	Güell House
1972	J.A. Coderch	Housing Banco Urquijo

designed by Peter Harnden and Lanfranco Bombelli, as well as numerous other buildings such as Federico Correa and Alfonso Milá's Casa Villavecchia (1955) or Casa Correa (1962), and Francesc Joan Barba i Corsini's Casa Barba (1965) that all capture the essence of the place, Cadaqués stands out as a town where the traditional and the modern coexist.²⁷ Like these other buildings, Coderch's iconic Casa Senillosa (1956), designed in collaboration with Valls, stands out as a reference for subsequent modern interventions in this old village (Fig. 1). Ponti featured the architecture of Cadaqués in *Domus* in November 1961, with buildings designed by Coderch and Harnden and Bombelli. This issue also



Figure 1. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, Casa Senillosa, Cadaqués (Spain), 1956. Left, main façade. Right, the interior of the living room, with the Polo fireplace (1955) and the Disa lamp (1957), both designed by Coderch. Photographs by F. Català-Roca © Fondo Fotográfico F. Català-Roca/Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya.



Figure 2. Peter Harnden and Lanfranco Bombelli, Estudio Marie Callery, Cadaqués (Spain), 1964. F. Català-Roca, 1966 © Fondo Fotográfico F. Català-Roca/Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya.

presented some of Coderch's buildings and included his text "No son genios lo que necesitamos ahora" ("It isn't geniuses we need right now").²⁸ A manifesto of sorts, this short text forcefully calls on the architect's responsibility towards society and argues for an architecture that is connected to its place, and declares that architects must take care of "the earth in which they have roots".²⁹ In this respect, Murcutt discovered similarities between Coderch and the Australian architect Sydney Ancher (1904–1979), in whose studio he had worked between 1964 and 1969. Murcutt valued Ancher's houses because in them "building and landscape [are] drawn together in aesthetic dialogue."³⁰

When Murcutt lectured in Barcelona in 2006 about his time in Cadaqués, he did not mention Coderch or the Casa Senillosa, but he showed one of the nine houses that Harnden and Bombelli built there (Fig. 2). Harnden and Bombelli moved to Cadaqués on Coderch's recommendation and, as their Cadaqués houses demonstrate, they used Coderch's architecture as a reference, mainly in his adaptation of traditional forms.³¹ In this lecture, Murcutt showed a photograph of the façade of Harnden's and Bombelli's Estudio Marie Callery (1964), a three-storey house on a steep, narrow alley, painted white with narrow balconies and openings shaded by operable louvres. He explained to his Catalan audience that "here, you know where this is. This was my experience in Cadaqués in 1973."³²

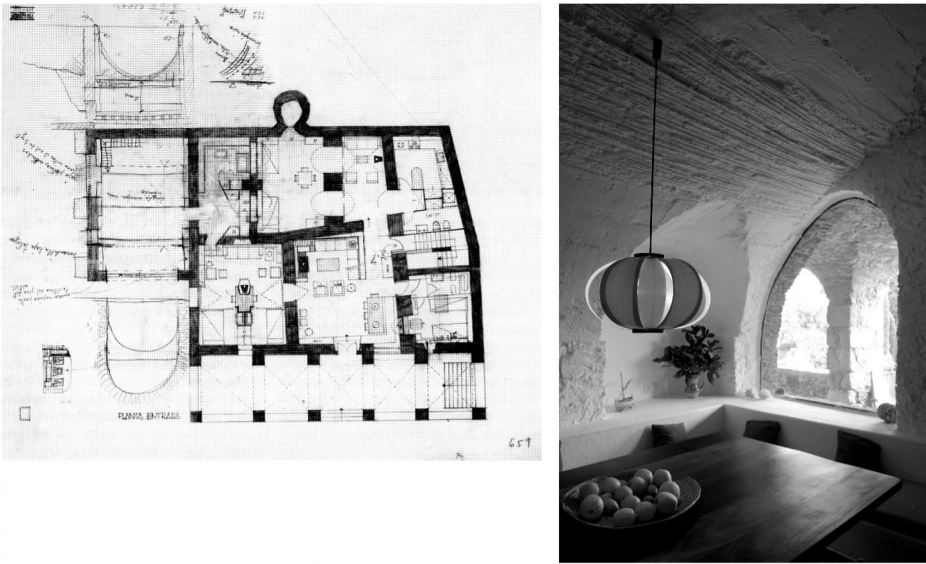


Figure 3. José Antonio Coderch, Casa Pairal, Espolla (Spain), 1964. Left: pen sketch by Coderch of the ground floor. Photograph by F. Català-Roca © Fondo Fotográfico F. Català-Roca/Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya. Right: entrance and living room, connected with the loggia arcade and with the Disa Lamp (1957), designed by Coderch. Photograph by Ana Rodríguez.

For an example of architecture that links with its place, and also connects past with present, Coderch recommended that Murcutt visit his Casa Pairal in Espolla (Girona), Coderch's hometown north of Barcelona.³³ A restoration of a sixteenth century house, this project integrated new elements in a way that was keenly sensitive to the historic original; it also helped Coderch return to his own family origins – his family had owned the house for several generations. The two-storey house sits atop a hill and faces south to maximise solar exposure and views. Elevated above street level, a vaulted masonry loggia provides access to the house. This traditional transition space occupies the entire façade and mediates between interior private spaces and the public realm (Fig. 3). In the restoration and expansion of this house, Coderch faced – for the first time – a pre-existing construction of masonry walls and vaults, built in the traditional manner of the region.³⁴ That Coderch suggested and allowed Murcutt to visit this house is noteworthy, since it reveals the value he placed on the project and the ways it connected with its location. Murcutt understood why this house was so important for Coderch; in his 1990 lecture at the University of Texas, Murcutt stated:

His [Coderch's] house, a sixteenth century house, [in] which he has completely redone [the interior], and I am particularly interested in that aspect of the new and the old, the working of a new unit. And if each whole is integrated then [one] can

work with the other without any difficulty at all in a sense of amplifying the quality of each, that is also an aspect we can find very, very important.³⁵

Murcutt's appreciation for Coderch's work lasted long after their original meeting in 1973. He continued to refer to Coderch in various publications and interviews, most notably his acceptance speech for the Pritzker Prize in 2002.³⁶ Previously in his career, Murcutt had considered Ellwood an important influence, yet on this occasion, he did not mention his meeting with Ellwood in Los Angeles in 1973. Instead, he highlighted his encounter with Coderch and used an entire paragraph of the speech to recall the advice that Coderch gave him in Barcelona when Murcutt expressed his self-doubts about his practice: "I also tell my students, you must put into your work first effort, secondly, love, and finally, and very Catholic, suffering. And even if the work is not great, it will show care and dedication."³⁷

The Immediate Impact of Coderch's Work on Murcutt

After establishing firstly, what is drawn from Murcutt's meeting with Coderch and secondly, how it happened, this third part of the paper focusses on the ways in which this encounter impacted on Murcutt's understanding of architecture. Two Murcutt houses of the early 1970s, one designed immediately before his encounter with Coderch and one designed immediately after, reveal the impact of this exchange in his work: The Laurie Short House (Sydney, completed in 1974) and the Marie Short House (Kempsey, completed in 1975).³⁸ Many critics consider the latter house as the beginning of Murcutt's own architectural language, in which he distanced himself from the canonical Miesian modernism that characterised his early works, in order to connect both physically and symbolically with a uniquely Australian sense of place.

Prior to 1973, Murcutt's work followed the archetypal glass pavilion, at times in the manner of Mies' Farnsworth House, and at other times in the manner of Philip Johnson's Glass House (New Canaan, 1949). On different occasions, Murcutt has pointed out that, as a teenager in 1951, his father showed him the Farnsworth House and it impressed him. Crystalline, abstract, transparent and horizontal, the Laurie Short House employs a Miesian structural steel frame and a flat roof. However, even this house diverges somewhat from Mies, with its herringbone terracotta pavement – which may be an interpretation of Johnson's house – and an extensive verandah protected by sliding louvred screens, as Frampton has noted.³⁹ It also incorporates an opening in the roof slab that is subdivided by angled metal louvres to provide shade in the summer. Ellwood's Rosen House (Pasadena, 1963), a glass pavilion built as part of John Entenza's Case Study House programme, may also have influenced Murcutt's design of the Laurie Short House. Murcutt toured the Rosen House during his 1973 visit to Los Angeles.⁴⁰



Figure 4. Glenn Murcutt, Marie Short House, Kempsey (Australia), 1975. Interior-external relationship. Photograph by Anthony Browell, courtesy of the Architecture Foundation Australia.

Designed immediately after his 1973 trip, the Marie Short House employs two pavilions arranged symmetrically around the main axis. Each volume also contains a verandah that expands the interior space. This house reveals that after his travels through North America and Europe Murcutt was more critical of Miesian form. Moreover, because this house maintains interior/ exterior spatial fluidity and connects with the place, tradition, climate, materials and constructive methods (Fig. 4), it appears that his 1973 trip and his meeting with Coderch were formative in his work.

One of Coderch's most iconic houses is the Casa Ugalde (Caldes d'Estrac, near Barcelona, 1952), which Murcutt may have visited in person during his trip. This house is a reinterpretation of modern architecture that is radically adapted to the place, tradition and landscape of its Mediterranean setting.⁴¹ The ground floor terraces of the Casa Ugalde and the dual verandahs of the Marie Short House expand fluidly into their surroundings. Thus, both houses represent approaches to context that are altogether different than those of Mies or Ellwood. Also, in both houses the careful composition of multiple forms, rather than a singular glass pavilion, generates diverse situations between interior and exterior. In this way, the abstract space-time of the canonical glass box is converted into existential and phenomenological space working with both the interior-external spaces and the surrounding landscape: The Ugalde House considers the expansive views of the Mediterranean, and Marie Short House connects with the Australian bush landscape. The covered outdoor spaces of both houses function as

mediators between the interior of the house and the infinite landscape it faces. In Murcutt's words:

For the human, it is important to break down the scale of the outside and filter it to the inside. In Australia I feel I am an ant in the landscape, but in the built environment by comparison I am a giant. This is the lesson of scale. In this house the verandah is the transition zone. The insect mesh-covered walls temper the sometimes-harsh light levels and soften the outlook to the landscape. There is a progression here of light level changes and scale adjustments.⁴²

Prior to Murcutt's 1973 trip, these connections between interior space and exterior landscape were inspired by other references, and some of these references, such as the Californian architect Gordon Drake (1917–1952), presented him with models similar to Coderch's. Murcutt had studied the book *Californian Houses of Gordon Drake* (1956) and also the Case Study Houses.⁴³ He was also familiar with other Australian examples that explore the connection between interior and exterior space, such as the Ancher house (Neutral Bay, 1957) designed by Ancher, Mortlock and Murray, or the Harry and Penelope Seidler House (Killara, 1966) designed by Harry Seidler.⁴⁴ As Philip Goad has stated recently, the influence of Brazilian Oscar Niemeyer (1907–2012) is noteworthy in Seidler's work, due to Seidler's travels in Brazil in 1948.⁴⁵ Niemeyer's Casa de Canoas (Rio de Janeiro, 1953) functioned similarly for Seidler as Coderch's Ugalde House did for Murcutt. Casa de Canoas and Ugalde House emphasise the fluid connection between interior and exterior and their forms fit the place and the landscape. The adaptation to the place and climate that Seidler observed

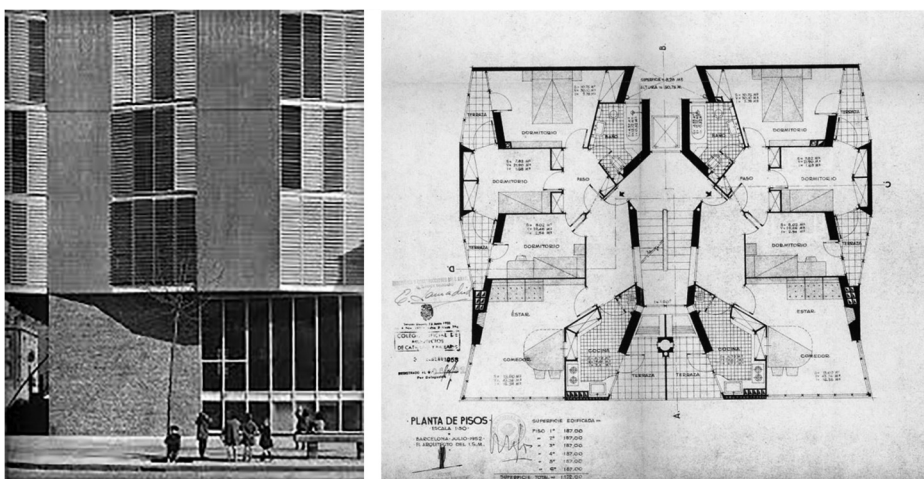


Figure 5. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, Barceloneta Housing, Barcelona (Spain), 1954. Left: detail of the façade; right: plan of the apartments. Photographs by F. Català-Roca © Fondo Fotográfico F. Català-Roca/Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya.

in Niemeyer, which helped him modify modern architecture to suit the Australian situation, parallels the impact of Coderch's work on Murcott.

The next point of connection between Coderch and Murcott emerges from this interior-exterior transition: both architects incorporate intermediate spaces that are defined by vertical control devices, such as blinds or insect screens, made of various materials. Coderch's work masterfully reinterpreted the traditional Mediterranean variant of this intermediate space and its screen elements by means of slatted shutters.⁴⁶ He patented these shutters in 1953.⁴⁷ In his 1954 project for multi-family housing in La Barceloneta, the window disappears from the façade and solid planes of ceramic tile and undulating slatted shutters protect three types of space (Fig. 5). In the living rooms the blinds sit against the glass as a simple means of controlling light and view. In the bedroom terraces, Coderch pulled the louvres away from the surface to generate an intermediate space that expands and connects the three bedrooms while also allowing climatic, visual and lighting control. In the kitchen terraces there is no glass, and the louvres hide laundry hung out to dry. These slatted shutters improve privacy and climate control, but they also provide a scaling device that mediates between the human being, the dwelling and the city. Specifically, in this case, given its location on the port esplanade, the continuous planes of slatted shutters contribute to the urban landscape.

Coderch's 1960 housing project on Johann Sebastian Bach Street – a typical street in Barcelona's Eixample district – is less organic than its counterpart in La Barceloneta, but its use of louvred screens and intermediate spaces is equally important. In the main façade, horizontal slabs support a series of slatted PVC shutters that are separated from the brick facing and the sliding glass windows. When used in the living and dining rooms, this



Figure 6. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, apartment building on Johann Sebastian Bach, Barcelona (Spain), 1960. View of the living room with the sliding glass windows open. Photograph by F. Català-Roca © Fondo Fotográfico F. Català-Roca/Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya.



Figure 7. A teacher stands in front of her simple home in Aramac (Australia) around 1914. She leans against the post of the low veranda. Image sourced from Picture Queensland, State Library of Queensland on <http://www.bonzle.com>. This image is free of copyright restrictions.

device expands the interior space into a protected exterior space that is controlled by shutters and textiles (Fig. 6). Murcutt used the façade of this building to illustrate the description of his encounter with Coderch.⁴⁸

Coderch's reinterpretation of intermediate spaces in traditional Mediterranean architecture inspired Murcutt to search the Australian vernacular for similar devices. The Australian verandah originated in colonial architecture as a strategy to mitigate the harsh effects of the climate and direct sun, and to mediate between interior and exterior (Fig. 7). Murcutt transformed this device into one of the most characteristic elements of contemporary Australian architecture.⁴⁹ Murcutt's first verandah appeared in the Laurie Short House, but

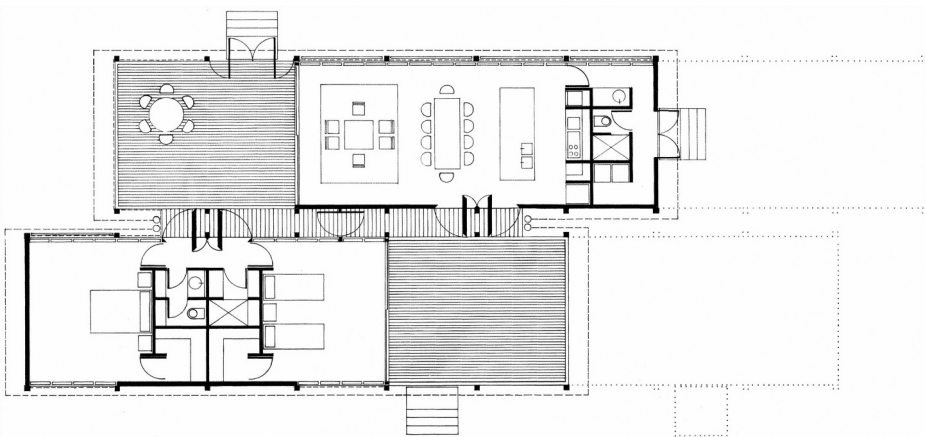


Figure 8. Glen Murcutt, Laurie Short House, Sydney (Australia), 1974. Plan of the built version with the verandah. The later extension is drawn with points. Courtesy of the Architecture Foundation Australia.

this space was not present in the preliminary version.⁵⁰ In the original scheme, he created a deck by elevating the floor of the house above the ground, as in Mies's Farnsworth House, and a ramp (never built) that provided access to the roof occupied much of the space of the deck. If built, the deck would have connected exterior and interior, and ground and finish floor level, but the ramp would have obscured views and disrupted the spatial continuity. Also, an opening in the roof exposed the exterior part of the family room, letting the sun and rain hit the glass directly, an effect that would have destroyed the interior/exterior spatial continuity. For these reasons, the deck space of this preliminary version was wholly different from the vernacular Australian verandah. In the final version, which he built after meeting Coderch, Murcutt eliminated the ramp and replaced it with an extensive verandah – a covered outdoor living area – that extended the living and family rooms into the exterior spaces and opened diagonally onto the landscape (Fig. 8). Sliding louvred screens shade this verandah and the adjacent family room on the east side, and the opening in the roof plane is filled with slats.

Years earlier, Coderch and Valls used similar strategies for houses located in the outskirts of Barcelona, which Murcutt may have visited in person. Perhaps most notable among these houses is the 1965 Casa Gili in Sitges, whose one-story volumes unfold across a relatively flat site. Coderch arranged the spaces of the house according to two axes. One axis links the sleeping zone with the entrance, dining room and kitchen, and opens onto a small patio. Running perpendicular to it, the other axis separates daytime and night-time areas and incorporates the living room, the vestibule, the porch and the swimming pool. At the intersection of these axes sits a semi-enclosed exterior courtyard in which the space is defined overhead by a series of parallel slats and laterally by large



Figure 9. José Antonio Coderch and Manuel Valls, Casa Gili, Sitges (Spain), 1966. Photograph by José Hevia. © José Hevia, 2003.

operable glass doors. The interior spaces unfold diagonally into the exterior through the vestibule (Fig. 9) and establish a spatial fluidity that is both physical and phenomenological.⁵¹ In the final version of Murcutt's Laurie Short House, the spatial organisation, extensive glazing, sliding louvred screens and semi-enclosed verandah operate in very similar ways.

In contrast with the glass pavilion of the Laurie Short House, the 1975 Marie Short House is a refined climatic machine. Designed and built after his encounter with Coderch, in this second house Murcutt incorporated two verandahs, in which operable metal louvres installed in the roof plane control daylight according to the season and glass louvres in the walls admit cross ventilation as a passive cooling strategy. The Marie Short House is climatically suited to its place, yet it also acknowledges and reinterprets traditional living habits, transforming the functional into the phenomenological.

The built version of the Laurie Short House – completed immediately after Murcutt's visit to Spain – and his use of operable louvres in the Marie Short House demonstrate what he discovered in the work of Coderch and other Catalonian houses during his 1973 trip. Decades later, Murcutt used an image of Harnden and Bombelli's Estudio Marie Callery to explain his discovery (Fig. 2):

This is fantastic! Look at the fact that you cannot see from outside to inside, but you can see from inside to outside. The building opens on the front and the back, positive pressure, negative pressure. A fantastic cooling system. This is not a struggle to be visible. It is, in fact, visible, but it relaxes in its environment. It is a sober architecture, I should say. Something that should be learned.⁵²

While this comment referred specifically to the modern reinterpretation of traditional shutters that Murcutt had observed in Cadaqués, it could just as well refer to any of the blinds Coderch used in the buildings Murcutt visited in Catalonia in 1973, or to Murcutt's own use of operable louvres in the Marie Short House.

Travelling Abroad to Understand Australia

Speaking to an audience in Barcelona in 2006, Murcutt concluded that

Sometimes one has to leave his own country to understand the beauty of his own country. You should leave your country to fully understand what it is that you have. Logically, it is the only way of seeing it.⁵³

Murcutt's travels through Catalonia in 1973 provided such an opportunity. From Coderch he learned to reinterpret vernacular strategies for use in modern architecture, and this lesson deeply affected Murcutt, as evidenced by the immediate changes he made to the design of the Laurie Short House and his

subsequent design for the Marie Short House. Murcutt's tours of traditional Catalanian architecture, his personal encounter with Coderch and his visits to Coderch's recently built projects were transformative in his professional trajectory.

This analysis has revealed three primary means of influence: the reinterpretation of modern ideas through the consideration of place and tradition, the continuity and expansion of space between interior and exterior, and the use of blinds and screens to define intermediate spaces, which is arguably the most tangible of the three. It is an element that originated in vernacular Catalanian architecture and which Coderch adapted masterfully in his own housing projects in Barcelona and Cadaqués as well as the Casa Pairal in Espolla. It defines a multi-use intermediate space that is open but covered, shaded from the sun, and linked to both the landscape and the interior. In Coderch's work, the louvred screen is not simply a spatial and phenomenological device, nor is it merely a contemporary update of a vernacular element; instead, it mediates between inhabitant, house, context and landscape, which is the primary lesson Murcutt learned from Coderch.

Moreover, this connection between Spain and Australia has lasted throughout Murcutt's ensuing career. In 1983, ten years after his first visit and one year before Coderch's death, Murcutt travelled with his sons from Paris, through Spain, to Morocco.⁵⁴ For Murcutt, Coderch was an important and constant reference, from their initial meeting in Catalonia in 1973 through Murcutt's emergence as an international leader. In Coderch's oeuvre, Murcutt discovered a synthesis of vernacular architecture and modern language that is physically and symbolically rooted in the tradition of the place. Murcutt also acknowledged that this synthesis, which Coderch initiated in his own work in the late 1940s, also pervades the work of later Catalanian architects such as Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramón Vilalta (RCR Arquitectes). When he presided over the committee that awarded the 2017 Pritzker Prize to this firm, Murcutt remarked on this continuity, with which he also identified personally. He used his public discourse to honour RCR's work as "an architecture that is embedded in the historic towns of Catalonia, yet one that extends beyond any boundaries of time and place."⁵⁵ It was Murcutt's means of paying homage to the strategies that he learned from the Catalanian modern master, and translated into Australia's antipodean landscape. Through the example of the relationship between Murcutt and Coderch, we can investigate the networks of exchange that expand across and reveal the architectural context of the mid-century, and that continue today.

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Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) in the session: “Opposite/ Apposite: Exchanges between Australasia and Ibero-America”.

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Notes

1. The global COVID-19 pandemic – ongoing at the time of research and publication – has prohibited direct contact between Spain and Australia. Therefore, this current article relies on Murcutt’s published accounts. Once the pandemic subsides, I hope to confirm and expand the research presented in this article by interviewing Murcutt in person.
2. In the first two monographs published about his work, Murcutt himself highlight this journey and, most notably his interactions with Coderch, as a pivotal moment in his architecture. See Philip Drew, *Leaves of iron. Glenn Murcutt: Pioneer of an Australian architectural form* (Sidney: Law Book Company Limited, 1985); and Philip Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly. Glenn Murcutt in his own words* (Potts Point: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1999). Also, see Glenn Murcutt, “Glenn Murcutt. 2002 Laureate. Acceptance Speech,” The Pritzker Architecture Prize Web, accessed 29 January 2020, https://www.pritzkerprize.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/2002_Acceptance_Speech.pdf and the last interview: Glenn Murcutt, “Australia’s most celebrated architect not ready to retire,” interview by Luke Slattery, *Financial Review*, 2 May 2019, <https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/design/australia-s-most-celebrated-architect-not-ready-to-retire-20190329-p518sz>.
3. Glenn Murcutt, “La arquitectura debe ser una respuesta, no una imposición,” interview by Anatxu Zabalbeascoa, *El País*, 18 June 2005, https://elpais.com/diario/2005/06/18/babelia/1119049574_850215.html.
4. Glenn Murcutt, “Introduction,” in *California Houses of Gordon Drake*, ed by. Douglas Baylis and Joan Parry (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2011), ii. For Murcutt’s reference to the Farnsworth House see Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 28.
5. About the first Murcutt trip, see Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 17–20.
6. Drew, *Leaves of Iron*, 39–41.
7. Françoise Fromonot, *Glenn Murcutt. Opere e progetti* (Milano: Electa, 1995), 27.
8. “This building alone contains and most completely reveals the aims and scope of Glenn Murcutt’s development after 1974”. Drew, *Leaves of Iron*, 41.
9. About this second trip, see: Drew, *Leaves of Iron*, 39–42; and Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 49–62.
10. Kenneth Frampton, “Homenage à Coderch,” 2G: *Revista internacional de arquitectura* [José Antonio Coderch. Casas. Houses], no. 33 (2006): 7.
11. José Antonio Coderch, “Historia de unas castañuelas,” *Nueva Forma*, no. 106 (November, 1974): 40. Quote translated by the author.
12. Coderch’s work in *Domus* until 1973: no. 240 (1949); no. 248–249, no. 250 (1950); no. 273, n. 275 (1952); no. 289 (1953); no. 306 (1955); no. 325 (1956); no. 332, no. 335

- (1957); no. 364, no. 373 (1960); no. 384 (1961); no. 420 (1964); no. 433 (1965); no. 445 (1966); no. 468 (1968); no. 477 (1969); and no. 503 (1971).
13. See Ana Rodríguez García, “No son genios lo que necesitamos ahora. Una reflexión sobre el escrito de J.A. Coderch en el contexto de Team 10,” in *I Congreso Pioneros de la Arquitectura Moderna Española: Vigencia de su pensamiento y obra: Actas digitales de las comunicaciones aceptadas al Congreso*, coord. Teresa Couceiro Núñez (Madrid: Fundación de la Sota and Ministerio de Fomento, 2014), 852–862.
 14. *Architecture, formes, fonctions=Architektur, Forms, Funktion=Architecture, forms, functions=Arquitectura, formas, funciones: publication internationale annuelle* [no.16] (Lausanne: A. Krafft, 1971).
 15. Carlos Flores, “La arquitectura de José Antonio Coderch y Manuel Valls. 1942–1960,” in *De Roma a Nueva York: Itinerarios de la nueva arquitectura española 1950–1965. Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Historia de la Arquitectura Moderna Española* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1998), 67–77.
 16. Drew, *Leaves of iron*, 44.
 17. “... but the Marie Short house (1974–75), and the Mt Irvine houses (1977–80) emerged towards the end of the Whitlam years, when the country seemed to be agitated about what it meant, culturally, to be Australian.” E. M. Farrelly, *Three Houses*. Glenn Murcutt (United Kingdom: Phaidon Press, 1993), no page.
 18. Drew, *Leaves of Iron*, 40.
 19. Glenn Murcutt “A conversation with Glenn Murcutt,” interview by Sean Godsell in *Glenn Murcutt 1980–2012: feathers of metal=plumas de metal* [no. 163/164] (Madrid: El Croquis, 2012), 9.
 20. In chronological order, Murcutt made specific reference to Coderch in: Drew, *Leaves of iron*, 41–42; Glenn Murcutt, “An Architecture of Place,” recorded Mach 23, 1990, The University of Texas at Austin, School of Architecture archives, Alexander Architectural Archives, audio, 19:05–19:40, <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/45754>. Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 60–61; Glenn Murcutt, “Glenn Murcutt. 2002 Laureate. Acceptance Speech.” Glenn Murcutt, “Up from Down Under; An interview with the 2002 Pritzker Prize winner, Australian architect Glenn Murcutt,” *Newsweek*, 22 April 2002; Glenn Murcutt, “La arquitectura debe ser una respuesta, no una imposición”; Glenn Murcutt, “Processes, a way of thinking,” filmed 26 May 2006 at the Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, Barcelona, video, 1.34 h., available at the Media Library of the Fundación Arquia, <https://fundacion.arquia.com/es-es/media-teca/filmoteca/p/Conferencias/Detalle/22>; Glenn Murcutt, “Maestros. Glenn Murcutt: La sustentabilidad es una frase hecha,” interview, *La Nación*, 20 August 2008, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/arquitectura/glenn-murcutt-la-sustentabilidad-es-una-frase-hecha-nid1041299/>; Simone Corda, “La flessibilità nell’abitare contemporaneo: l’opera di Glenn Murcutt come manuale” (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Cagliari, 2010), 84–85, <http://hdl.handle.net/11584/26634>; Glenn Murcutt, “Australia’s most celebrated architect not ready to retire.”
 21. Glenn Murcutt. *Travel Diary: Mexico, U.S.A., Canada and Europe*. 2nd September to 8 November 1973. 160 × 219 mm. 195 pp. This diary appears as “private records” in Drew, *Leaves on Iron*, 144.
 22. José Antonio Coderch Archive, in the Museo Reina Sofía Research Centre, Library and Archive in Madrid (Spain); The Historical Archive of the Architects’ Association of Catalonia (Spain); Glenn Murcutt aggregated collection of architectural plans, correspondence and business papers, 1961–2011, in the State Library New South Wales (Australia); The Alexander Architectural Archives in the Architecture and

- Planning Library of the University of Texas Libraries (USA), which keeps the audio file of Murcutt's lecture in 1990.
23. Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 60.
 24. *Ibid.*, 60–61.
 25. See note 23 above.
 26. Drew, *Leaves of iron*, 42.
 27. See Antonio Pizza, ed., *Imaginando la casa mediterránea: Italia y España en los años 50=Imagining the Mediterranean house: Italy and Spain in the 50s* (Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas and Fundación ICO, 2019).
 28. This issue of the journal was dedicated to Cadaqués: “A Cadaqués,” *Domus*, no. 384 (November 1961). In this issue, see: José Antonio Coderch, “No son genios lo que necesitamos ahora,” *Domus*, no. 384 (November 1961): 1. Jose Antonio Coderch, “It isn't geniuses we need right now,” trans. Monica Gili in “Homenage à Coderch,” *2G: Revista internacional de arquitectura* [José Antonio Coderch. Casas. Houses], no. 33 (2006): 134–138.
 29. García-Diego, “Living, Creating, Enjoying,” 159.
 30. Glenn Murcutt, “Foreword,” in *An Unfinished Experiment in Living. Australian Houses 1950–1965*, ed by. Geoffrey London, Philip Goad and Conrad Haman (Crawley: The University of Western Australia UWA, 2018), viii.
 31. About the relation and friendship between Coderch and Harnden and Bombelli see: Héctor García-Diego Villarías, and María Villanueva Fernández, “Living, Creating, Enjoying: Villa Gloria by Harnden and Bombelli in Cadaqués (1959),” *VLC arquitectura* 7, no. 2 (October 2020):157–184, <https://doi.org/10.4995/vlc.2020.11843>; and Julio Garnica, “Harnden y Bombelli en España,” in *La arquitectura norteamericana, motor y espejo de la arquitectura española en el arranque de la modernidad (1940–1965)* (Pamplona: T6 Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2006), 133–142.
 32. Glenn Murcutt, “Processes, a way of thinking.”
 33. Drew, *Leaves of iron*, 42; and Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 60.
 34. About the vaults and rehabilitation process, see Ana Rodríguez García and Rafael Hernando de la Cuerda, “Coderch y las bóvedas de Espolla,” in *Décimo Congreso Nacional y Segundo Congreso Internacional Hispanoamericano de Historia de la Construcción*, vol. 3 (Donostia-San Sebastián: Escuela de Arquitectura de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2017), 1429–1439.
 35. Glenn Murcutt, “An Architecture of Place.”
 36. Along with Coderch, Murcutt named the following non-Australian architects as primary sources for his own work: Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Jørn Utzon, Gordon Drake, Charles and Ray Eames, Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoët, and Alvar Aalto. Also he named Australian architects: Noel Bazeley, Neville Gruzman, and Bill and Ruth Lucas. Glenn Murcutt, “Glenn Murcutt. 2002 Laureate. Acceptance Speech.”
 37. Murcutt, “Glenn Murcutt. 2002 Laureate. Acceptance Speech,” 3.
 38. This paper refers to the original Marie Short House, not Murcutt's expansion of it between 1981 and 1982.
 39. Kenneth Frampton, “The Architecture of Glenn Marcus Murcutt,” essay 2002, The Pritzker Architecture Prize Web, accessed 29 January 2020, https://www.pritzkerprize.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/2002_essay.pdf.
 40. See the chapter “The Glass Pavilion, 1970–73,” in Drew, *Leaves on Iron*, 25–38.
 41. Through the idea of fluid space, José María Montaner has linked the Ugalde house with the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe. See José María Montaner, “La

- experiencia del lugar. Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Enrico Tedeschi, José Antonio Coderch y Lina Bo Bardi,” *Cuadernos de proyectos arquitectónicos*, no. 2 (2011): 39–45.
42. Glenn Murcutt, “Marie Short House/Glen Murcutt House,” in *Glenn Murcutt 1980–2012: feathers of metal=plumas de metal* [no. 163/164] (Madrid: El Croquis, 2012), 55.
 43. Murcutt, “Foreword,” vii.
 44. Barry Bergdoll, “Australian idiom,” in *Australia modern: architecture, landscape & design*, ed by. Hannah Lewi and Philip Goad Victoria (Australia: Thames & Hudson, 2019), 13.
 45. Philip Goad, “New World: Harry Seidler, South America and the Australian City,” *Society of Architectural Historians SAH 2020 Virtual Conference*, April 30–1 May 2020, <https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/events/973/program-app/submission/135333>.
 46. See Víctor Rahola and Stefano Cortellaro, “Variations on folding shutters in the work of Coderch,” *Quaderns d’arquitectura i urbanisme*, no. 253 (2007): 78–81.
 47. About the relationship between Coderch and Llambí shutters company in detail see Josep Minguet, ed., *Slat Façades. Fachadas en Celosía* (Sant Adrià de Besòs: Instituto Monsa de ediciones, 2013).
 48. Drew, *Touch this Earth Lightly*, 60.
 49. See Haig Beck and Jackie Cooper, “Vivir en Australia: significado de la veranda,” *Detail. Revista de Arquitectura y Detalles Constructivos*, no. 3 (September-October 2003): 266–270.
 50. Plans, sections, elevations and sketch of the first version were published in Simone Corda, “La flessibilità nell’abitare contemporaneo,” 104–105.
 51. About the Casa Gili see: Sonia Vázquez-Díaz, “Patios del silencio: mecanismos arquitectónicos para la emoción en los patios modernos interiorizados y contemplativos en las casas españolas de los años 1950–60” (PhD diss., University of a coruña, 2013), 323–360.
 52. see note 32 above.
 53. Murcutt, “Processes,” min. 51.
 54. Glenn Murcutt, “Australia’s most celebrated architect not ready to retire.” I have found no other references to this 1983 trip. Future research and direct contact with Murcutt may shed light on this trip’s purpose and outcome, and whether it allowed Murcutt to visit Coderch or his works.
 55. Glenn Murcutt, “2017 Laureates Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramon Vilalta. Ceremony Speech,” The Pritzker Architecture Prize Web, accessed 29 January 2020, https://www.pritzkerprize.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/2017_GlennMurcuttCeremonySpeech.pdf.

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