

Architect David Tapias Monné merged old and new at Josep Cruset and Encarna Rega's country house in Reus, Spain. Off the back of the original house (inset), which Josep's family has owned for decades,

Tapias created a 1,500-square-foot addition made of prefabricated cross-laminated timber (CLT). Existing features include a rainwater reservoir and a workshop once used by Josep's father.



The Mediterranean country house is an architectural tradition that unites Europeans beyond national borders and across social classes. The French maintain them in Provence, and the Spanish in Catalonia—where the name for such houses is *mas*—havens for city dwellers seeking downtime near the balmy coast. The rich have them and so do the not-so-rich, though the rich, of course, have bigger ones that can resemble elegant chateaus,

while their middle-class neighbors are more likely to camp out in something closer to a farmhouse, a little more rustic and a lot more handmade.

The *mas* inherited by Josep Cruset and Encarna Rega in 2015 was “somewhere in the middle,” according to their architect, David Tapias Monné. It started out in 1933 as a single two-story masonry structure but was expanded into a compound over time by Josep's late father, a watchmaker >

Catalonian Collage

A family adds another layer to an ever-evolving country retreat.

renovation

Rather than demolish the *mas* (inset and below), Tapias retained the 1933 building and transformed it into a space emptied of any specific program. “The residents can adapt it to their daily, weekly, seasonal,

or lifetime needs,” he says. A metal roof structure shades the addition (center left). In the kitchen and dining area, the CLT panels serve as structure and finish as well as furniture (bottom).



and all-around tinkerer, who, Tapias says, spent decades “welding, screwing, and growing all kinds of rooms, huts, sheds, sheds, and porches” on the property. “My first memories are of the country house in poor condition and doing a lot of maintenance just to be able to live there,” says Josep. “But the place had charm, with a garden, trees, and an orchard.”

Now it has plenty of neighbors, too. The Spanish city of Reus, where it’s located, has grown up around it, placing the *mas* in the middle of a desirable residential area—which is why the couple, who have a teenage daughter, decided to move there full-time from another part of the city. They asked Tapias if they should upgrade the old place or build something new. His answer: both.

Tapias developed a plan to renovate the existing 1,900-square-foot main building and complement it with a 1,500-square-foot addition, accommodating the owners’ >



To connect the addition to the *mas*, Tapias and his team built an annex onto the existing entrance gallery (inset and top). “There are transition spaces that move you from the old house to the new,”

he says. The rounded edges of the living room’s openings (above) correspond to the CNC router used to cut the wood. “It can’t cut straight corners, so we decided to make them curved,” Tapias says.

request for a mostly single-story home they could still occupy as they grew older. The project came with a few advantages. The *mas* is in the center of a developed block with buildings as high as five stories surrounding it. It remains an oasis in that way, not visible from the street and accessible only through a narrow passageway.

Tapias decided to let the tall neighbors act as buffers against wind and rain, which allowed the addition, consisting of a living area, a kitchen, a bathroom, and three

bedrooms, to be made from lightweight materials. He used prefabricated panels of cross-laminated timber for just about everything—the exterior and interior walls, the ceiling, and the floor, with leftover pieces recycled into custom furnishings. The CLT panels, made of three engineered layers of spruce, are about three inches thick, and most were left exposed and unpainted. A few exterior walls were clad in cork for insulation. The family now uses the addition as their primary living space. >



Since Josep and Encarna wanted to live on a single level, Tapias removed part of the *mas*’s second floor to create a double-height space (inset). Pendants by Faro Barcelona hang near the balcony

(below). The ground floor, designed to be flexible, currently holds offices for the couple, a library, a living room, and a piano for their teenage daughter. The terrazzo floors are original to the house.

• **Mas JEC** N ②
ARCHITECT **Aixopluc**
LOCATION **Reus, Spain**

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| A Entrance | G Multipurpose Space |
| B Living Area | H Wine Cellar |
| C Kitchen/Dining Area | I Well |
| D Laundry | J Outdoor Shower |
| E Bedroom | K Outdoor Kitchen |
| F Bathroom | L Guestroom |

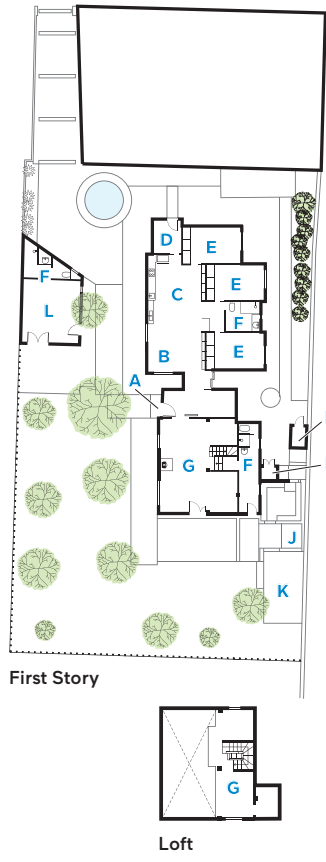


ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT



“To minimize the impact of the new structure, we kept it lightweight, using CLT panels and slim steel posts.”

DAVID TAPIAS MONNÉ, ARCHITECT

renovation

For the renovation of the existing *mas*, Tapias and his team demolished half of the first story's ceiling, creating a small second-floor loft with a balcony. The remainder of the first story now has a 17-foot ceiling. They removed all of the *mas*'s original programmatic elements except a bathroom—"Kitchen gone, rooms gone," says Tapias—leaving a largely empty space that can be adapted to changing needs. (In the future, the existing *mas* may become a separate home for Josep and Encarna's daughter.) There's a new outdoor kitchen and shower just a few steps away, and another bedroom and bathroom in a free-standing guest apartment that was formerly a garage.

The couple believe the project honors their family history while moving the *mas* forward. Reus just happens to be the birthplace of revered Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí, providing both inspiration and a responsibility to respect design. "Creativity," says Josep, "is part of who we are." ■



The high-ceilinged bathroom receives natural light throughout the day, while porthole-type windows on both sides provide ventilation (above). Tapias covered the addition's shady east facade with two

layers of cork (below), which he also placed on the roof of the three bedrooms. "Cork is a natural insulation that can be used without any cladding," he explains. "It lets the wood breathe, and it's waterproof."

