

Las Arenas, Barcelona



Place/Date
Barcelona, Spain 2000–2011

Client
Metrovacesa (originally Sacresa)

Area
Gross internal area – 105,816m²
Bullring – 46,973m²
Eforum – 5,500m²
Parking – 53,343m²

Architect
Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners

Co-Architect
Alonso Balaguer y Arquitectos Asociados

Structural Engineer
Expedition Engineering and BOMA

Services Engineer
JG and BDSP

Quantity Surveyor
TG3

Retail Consultant
Sociedad Centros Comerciales España (S.C.C.E)

Main Contractor
Dragados

Acoustic Consultant
BDSP and Audioscan

Roofing Contractor
Finnforest

Services Contractor
IMTECH and EMTE

Steel Contractor (for the Dish)
Martifer

Bullring Façade Contractor
Joan Obré

Office Façade Contractor
Strunor



Las Arenas is strategically located at the foothill of Montjuïc at the intersection of Gran Via and Avenue Paral·lel, two major city highways, and acts as a landmark for the Plaça d'Espanya transport interchange. The historic bullring, constructed at the very end of the 19th century, fell largely into disuse towards the end of the 1970s due to the declining popularity of bull fighting in Catalonia. However, the strong civic and cultural role which the building played in the life of Barcelona over nearly a century led to a decision by the city council that the façade should not be demolished.

As a result, the redevelopment has retained and refurbished the striking neo-mudèjar façade, while creating an open and accessible entrance to the new building at street level. Within the façade are commercial, entertainment, health and leisure spaces focused around a central event space.

The original bullring was raised above the levels of the surrounding streets with ramps and stairs within the plinth providing access. However, the redevelopment – which involved the excavation of the base of the façade and the insertion of composite arches to support the existing wall and create new spaces for shops and restaurants – re-establishes a new, open public realm around the base of the building providing level access to the complex.

The resolution of the ground plane surrounding the bullring is key to the project. Two main access routes cut through the building at 180 degrees to each other, providing access from Gran Via and Parc Joan Miró, as well as Carrer Tarragona and Carrer de Llança and forming a cruciform

system leading into the central atrium space. New plazas are created around the pre-existing façade which is now readable as a drum meeting the ground.

The telecommunications tower facing Plaça d'Espanya reinforces the presence of the bullring and – at its base – provides direct access from street level and the metro station Espanya to the building. A separate building – the 'Eforum' – in Carrer de Llança, provides retail and restaurants at ground and first-floor levels, with four levels of offices above.

The development links strongly to the nearby Fira de Barcelona – a key European business exhibition venue – and the neighbouring districts of Eixample and Sants-Montjuïc, one of Barcelona's fastest-growing and most dynamic areas.

The most spectacular aspect of the intervention is the inclusion of a 100-metre-diameter habitable 'dish', floating over the façade of the bullring – and structurally independent from it – providing flexible, column-free spaces beneath. This 'plaza in the sky' incorporates large terraces with 360-degree stunning views over the city around the perimeter of its 76-metre-diameter domed roof, which covers spaces for cafés and restaurants and a central multi-purpose space.

All the constituent parts – the façade, the roof-level spaces, the four internal segments and the adjacent Eforum – are structurally independent, allowing for future flexibility and change to encourage a wide variety and rotation of activities, including sports events, fashion shows and exhibitions. Las Arenas was opened to the public in March 2011.

All the constituent parts – the façade, the auditorium, the internal 'segments' and the adjacent building are all structurally independent, allowing for future flexibility and change.

