

sizeable piece of land on which to raise a house fitting his position.

Antònia Navarro had a sumptuous town house raised on the site and made a grand opening in 1905 on the occasion of the wedding of one of her daughters. She had been widowed very young and ran the family business astutely, managing to buy still more properties and improve her social status by acquiring property from the marquis of La Romana, where the family would spend the summer from then on. To show just how well-off she was, she had each of her many properties painted on the enamelled tiles that still surround the house's porticoed courtyard today.

Antònia was a matriarch of considerable character, who had the city's most outstanding dwelling made to measure for herself as the HQ from which she controlled the strings of her little empire. Thus, only a small portion of the building (the apartment) is designed with family life in mind. The majority of the rooms were conceived for public relations: the immense reception room, the rooms for visitors, the study, the inner cloister-courtyard, the chapel and, above all, the spectacular ballroom reached by a magnificent spiral staircase. This latter image is the house's visual call sign in any publication in which it appears.



*Sculpted detail of a corbel / Detall escultòric d'una mènsula*

With the Civil War (1936-39), the house lost its original function and was occupied by Italian army officers. In this period, the parquet suffered greatly and most of the original furniture disappeared. Antònia Navarro's descendents moved to Madrid and never again lived in the house - when they visited Novelda they went to La Romana. Later the property was handed over to the religious order of St Joseph of Cluny, which set up a girls' school there. The ballroom became the chapel and the



*Main façade / Façana principal*

bedrooms classrooms. Some of the original decoration was lost for good. Happily, the Caixa d'Estalvis de Novelda savings bank acquired the building in 1975 to use it for socio-cultural purposes and two years later began restoration. Thanks to that work, the House-Museum, now owned by the Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo bank's cultural foundation, constitutes the best example of Modernisme away from this movement's better known routes. 