

Madrid-based Taujel isn't just the only company in the world that creates mysterious, elaborately interlaced "Mudejar"-style ceilings; it employs the only people in 400 years to know how.

The Mudejars, whose craft flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries, were Muslims often working at the behest of the resurgent Catholic nobility. Exquisite artisans—and, as it turns out, keen mathematicians—they evolved a complex wood-carving system, Moorish in influence but uniquely Spanish, whose results can be seen in cultural treasures such as the Alhambra and Alcázar palaces. Or, thanks to Taujel, in the rumpus room of your own hacienda.

Taujel's story begins in 1984, when architect Enrique Nuere and engineer José Luis Aranzadi gained possession of a dusty 17th-century manuscript—one of only two in existence—that held the mathematical secrets of the Mudejars' lost art. Working with a team of scholars, they translated both works (the second one turned up, go figure, in the library at the University of Texas) into present-day Spanish and modern math formulas.

Even with this prize in hand, however, there was no possibility of training craftsmen to duplicate the practiced technique of generations. Instead, Nuere and Aranzadi set to work designing a computer program, much massaged over the intervening years, that could direct woodcutting tools according to the intricate ratios and proportions of Mudejar geometry. The genius of the thing is that these stunning, multifaceted ceilings can then be installed by ordinarily diligent workmen.

Today Taujel's business is partly in restoring Spanish national treasures such as the ceilings of the Alhambra, partly in creating new ceilings for public spaces including the Museo Picasso in Málaga and partly in private homes like Julio Iglesias'. Other clients have popped up from Beverly Hills to Saudi Arabia. Says Nuere, "It's strange with our company's origins in historic restoration that we've now become almost trendy."

Though Taujel's ceiling prices vary by wood choice and design, figure a base price of about \$1,500 per square meter. Not bad, considering that you'd be not only the first person on your block to have a timeless Mudejar-style masterpiece but among the first in your century. •



Eyes to heaven: Passion meets geometry in a Taujel ceiling.

Serious Overhead

Spanish designers recapture the lost genius of 15th-century masters.

For more information: www.taujel.com.