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Barcelona moderna

From Gaudí to Picasso

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Foreword

Around 1900, Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, evolved into one of the most dynamic cultural centers of Europe. The city was the industrial heart of Spain and at the same time a place of class tensions where the problems of industrialization and societal questions were being negotiated with particular intensity. From the 1860s onward, an extensive urban expansion was carried out that turned Barcelona into a modern metropolis: A new planned quarter was built with a checkerboard network of streets and stately architecture.

Catalan Modernisme was formed in these surroundings—an artistic movement that embraced architecture, painting, and design as well as music and literature. It was engaged with the relationship between the traditional and the modern, the search for a Catalan self-conception, and the effort to bring Spanish cultural heritage into the present. By 1898, when it lost its last major overseas colonies—Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—Spain found itself in a crisis of identity. The Renaixença (rebirth) movement in literature, dating back to the 1830s, had already increased awareness of Catalan language, history, and culture. Modernisme took up the thread and tried to translate this cultural revival into a contemporary aesthetic.

Barcelona moderna: From Gaudí to Picasso is the first exhibition in Germany dedicated to this cultural phenomenon. With examples of painting, graphic art, sculpture, furniture, and architectural models, it sheds light on artistic developments in the city between 1880 and 1914. It not only illustrates the stylistic diversity of Modernisme but also places the works within the urban, social, and cultural structures of Barcelona and Catalonia.

In addition to encounters with famous artists such as Antoni Gaudí and the young Pablo Picasso, *Barcelona moderna* offers an opportunity to rediscover numerous figures who are little known outside their native country. They include the architects Lluís Domènech i Montaner and Josep Puig i Cadafalch, as well as the painters Hermen Anglada Camarasa, Ramon Casas, Joaquim Mir, Isidre Nonell, and Santiago Rusiñol. The exhibition focuses on Barcelona's transformation into a modern metropolis and the ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk in architecture and design. Casas and Rusiñol explored Paris and helped open the French capital to the following generation as a place of intense exchange. Their works show Paris not as a pulsating city full of life but rather in quiet, gray scenes. Despite his numerous stays there, Rusiñol remained closely connected to his Catalan homeland. In Sitges, a coastal town around forty kilometers southwest of Barcelona, he built the Cau Ferrat, meaning "iron cave" or "iron refuge." The house was not just a residence and studio but also an exhibition space and meeting place for artists.

The exhibition explores the tensions that existed in this large city composed of the bourgeoisie, workers, and marginalized groups, and highlights the cultural venues of Catalan Modernisme such as the café Els Quatre Gats. The search for places of retreat is also reflected in the landscapes produced on Mallorca, an island then still largely untouched by tourism. Early works by Pablo Picasso, which reveal the formative influence of Catalan culture, mark the transition to European modernity.

With *Barcelona moderna* the Kunsthalle München and the Museum Barberini invite you to discover the city as an artistic laboratory and one of the most influential places of European Modernism around 1900. The exhibition brings renewed attention to a generation of artists whose works once attracted attention across Europe but have since been unjustly forgotten outside Spain. At the same time, Catalan Modernisme touches on issues that also affect the present: How can cultural identity be fostered without cutting the nation off from others? The artists and architects of this movement saw themselves as part of the European art scene, sought inspiration abroad, and connected Catalan traditions with international currents in the avant-garde. Barcelona around 1900 can be regarded as an exemplary venue for the fruitful tension between regional heritage and cross-border exchange.

This exhibition could not have been realized without the involvement of numerous people. We would like to thank the

curators of the exhibition—Carlos Alonso Pérez-Fajardo, Nerina Santorius, and Franziska Stöhr—for their ambitious concept and its skillfully executed realization as a collaborative project between the Kunsthalle München and the Museum Barberini. They have succeeded in bringing together outstanding and rarely exhibited works on loan that powerfully illustrate this multifaceted theme at both venues. This catalog has its origins in a symposium organized at the Museum Barberini in December 2025, and we thank the authors for their valuable contributions. Our appreciation goes likewise to research associate Jasmin Gierling and assistant curators Julia Keinath and Emilia Geist for their committed support of the exhibition and catalog. We are also grateful to the entire teams of both institutions. Their tireless efforts, patience, meticulous work, and enthusiasm have contributed substantially to the success of *Barcelona moderna*.

Without the support of lenders, exhibition concepts remain mere theory. This exhibition would not have been possible without the valuable collaboration of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, which went far beyond lending numerous pioneering works. With their scholarly expertise and generous support, our colleagues there substantially enriched the project and made vital contributions to its realization, for which we owe them special gratitude. We sincerely thank the Círculo del Liceo, the Colección Casacuberta Marsans, and the Museu Carmen Thyssen in Barcelona; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid; the Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias in Oviedo; the Fundació "la Caixa"; Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani de Palma; and the Museu del Cau Ferrat in Sitges for extraordinary generosity in making works available, as well as numerous other museums and private collectors. Nadia Hernández Henche, Ignasi Domènech i Vives, and Francesc Quílez Corella enriched this project in many ways beyond their contributions to this catalog, through scholarly exchange and their excellent network. We owe to their support certain contacts with private lenders, some of whose works have not been seen in public for decades. We would like to thank here once again Carlos Alonso Pérez-Fajardo, whose indefatigable support and personal involvement made many important loans possible.

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Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona
Arxiu Joan Maragall, Barcelona
Biblioteca Museu Víctor Balaguer, Vilanova i la Geltrú
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Hiroshima Museum of Art
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Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
Museo Opisso Hotel Astoria, Barcelona
Museu Carmen Thyssen Barcelona
Museu de la Garrotxa, Olot
Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges
Museu de Maricel, Sitges
Museu de Pollença
Museu d'Història de Barcelona
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Nerina Santorius

Barcelona 1900:
A Stage for Modernisme

In 1854, Barcelona began demolishing its medieval city walls.[1] The city was bursting at the seams: The migration of the workers needed for the booming textile industry[2] caused the population to grow during the first half of the century from 115,000 (1802) to 187,000 (1850). On the one hand, industrialization brought an economic boom and prosperity; on the other, living and working conditions for the working class were poor, leading to social tensions, against which measures needed to be taken. Based on plans by the engineer and urban planner Ildefons Cerdà, the first modern European grid city was built to the north and east of medieval Barcelona beginning in the 1860s. It was named Eixample (Expansion; cat. 1). These urbanist efforts raised the question of what Barcelona's new architecture should look like: What should it stand for, what national and regional identities should it reflect, and what individual ideas of specific clients should it convey? Architects such as Lluís Domènech i Montaner, Josep Puig i Cadafalch, and Antoni Gaudí gave a face to the sober and neutral grid structure of the Cerdà Plan. They developed a new language of Modernism that shaped the cityscape of Barcelona in a unique way and lent artistic form to the history and myth of the metropolis. The present essay explores the distinguishing features of Modernisme in its architectural expression and in the fine arts, situating the movement within late-nineteenth-century culture and politics in Spain, while also shedding light on how the artists were received in Germany.

In his essay "En busca de una arquitectura nacional" (In Search of a National Architecture), published in 1878, Domènech i Montaner denied that it was possible to create a genuinely national architecture in the modern era. He argued instead for studying the principles and teachings of past epochs and cultures and taking the best elements from each in an eclectic manner to develop a new architecture adapted to modern needs.[3] Domènech i Montaner was able to implement his innovative approaches at the 1888 World's Fair in Barcelona, for which he designed the Gran Hotel Internacional (fig. 1), among other projects. The World's Fair reflected efforts to present Barcelona as a modern, progressive, cosmopolitan city to an international audience and thus join the ranks of metropolises such as Paris and London. At the same time, it was a culmination of the Renaixença (rebirth) movement, which sought to revive Catalan language and culture by drawing in various ways on the region's magnificent medieval past. Catalonia had sided with the Habsburgs in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14); after the Habsburgs were defeated, the Spanish Bourbons declared Castilian the sole official language, effectively removing Catalan from public life.



1 View of the Gran Hotel Internacional by Lluís Domènech i Montaner, 1888–89, Barcelona (demolished)

All three of the architects mentioned above were strongly marked by the spirit of the Renaixença and worked on Barcelona's urban expansion, partly with the goal of creating a Catalan identity politics, as is reflected in the three buildings they remodeled on the same block of the grand Passeig de Gràcia: the Casa Amatller (1900), the Casa Lleó Morera (1902–6), and the Casa Batlló (1904–6), known together as Barcelona's "apple of discord" because of the competitive nature of the architects[4] (fig. 2). For example, the stepped gable of the Casa Amatller is reminiscent of Central European medieval burghers' houses and hence evokes the ideals and freedoms of the old bourgeois culture; likewise, the masonry and cast-iron work—sometimes in a Gothic idiom—echo craft traditions. The success of Barcelona's industrial development is tied to these traditions.[5] For the Casa Lleó Morera, Domènech i Montaner combined Gothicizing elements with allegorical designs whose attributes—a camera, a lightbulb, and a telephone—suggest the latest technological achievements (cats. 7–9). The Casa Batlló alludes to the legend of Saint George, the patron saint of Catalonia and Barcelona: His fight with the dragon is symbolized by a vaulted tile roof resembling a dragon's back with scales, from which looms a tower with a four-armed cross like the hilt of a sword. Gaudí's bone-shaped columns and balcony grates reminiscent of skulls have been interpreted as an allusion to the dragon's victims.[6] Moreover, the facade's wavy form and its cladding with glass and ceramic mosaics (*trencadís*) suggestive of a marine environment allude to Barcelona's Mediterranean culture and geographical location. Other construction and decorative elements found on the three buildings express the origins, professional achievements, and individual interests of their owners. Because the expansion of the city here—unlike, for example, the state-ordered redesign of Paris by Baron Haussmann—came from private initiatives, the architecture reflects more the identity and interests of the prosperous bourgeoisie. This also contributed to the diversity of forms in Modernisme, which cannot be reduced to a uniform style. It occurred in various forms of architecture, painting, sculpture, graphic art, and crafts as well as in music, literature, and theater—and also produced highly diverse, independent tendencies within these arts. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify specific features of the movement across all these mediums and distinguish it from European variants of Art Nouveau and other artistic movements of the time.

Modernisme: Places and Activities

The word *modernista* was first used in 1884, in an issue of the journal *L'Avens* (Progress), which had dedicated itself to "supporting an essentially *modernist* literature, science, and art in



2 Passeig de Gràcia with the Casa Lleó Morera by Lluís Domènech i Montaner (left corner building), the Casa Amatller by Josep Puig i Cadafalch (with stepped gable), and the Casa Batlló by Antoni Gaudí (to the right of it)

our country."[7] Over the course of the 1890s, the term spread and became increasingly associated with artistic trends in Barcelona. The painters Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol were seen as the most important exponents of the new aesthetic, having brought home crucial artistic ideas and inspiration from several stays in Paris beginning in the 1880s. Casas's *Studio Interior* (fig. 3), painted in the French capital in 1883, presents, with Chinese lanterns, garlands, and other remnants of a party, the "golden" life of bohemia, which the young artists from well-off families were able to enjoy. One searches in vain for painting implements amid the disorder in the sparse, dark workspace—apart from the party decorations.

In 1889, Casas and Rusiñol attracted the attention of critics with portraits of each other shown at the Sala Parés gallery in Barcelona (fig. 4; cat. 21): Casas depicts Rusiñol as self-confident in a classic ruler's pose and dressed as a traveler in front of one of his own landscape paintings, which largely obscures part of a copy of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656, Museo Nacional del Prado). A new direction is also announced by Rusiñol's unconventional depiction of Casas as a cyclist, sitting very casually on a weathered bench next to his parked bicycle and taking a cigarette break. In the exhibitions that followed, the two artists presented numerous works they had painted in Paris:[8] above all naturalistic scenes, sometimes indebted to Impressionism as well, of modern bohemian life in Montmartre, which was then still a largely undeveloped suburb of the capital, with vacant lots, construction sites, and temporary housing (cats. 24, 26). For a Spanish audience accustomed to picturesque, anecdotal painting, and which knew Paris at best as a backdrop for pleasant genre paintings with scenes from the lives of the upper classes, the "low" motifs of the Modernists in subdued shades of blue, gray, and brown opened up a new visual experience. With their orientation toward the French avant-garde, these painters reinforced Barcelona's identity as an open, cosmopolitan, cultural metropolis that had broken with the academic tradition in Spanish art.

Casas's and Rusiñol's initiatives were not limited to the renewal of painting. They established meeting places and launched events and publications that offered Modernisme a platform and helped it spread. Rusiñol's studio-museum the Cau Ferrat ("iron cave" or "refuge"; cat. 45; figs. pp. 20, 23, 127) in the small fishing village of Sitges, near Barcelona, became an important hub for the leading figures of Modernisme: a temple in which art was celebrated as a new religion.[9] It focused on the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, embracing all genres and supporting a search for a lost wholeness and sensuousness, with the goal of a spiritual renewal of society.[10] This idea took form in the five Festes Modernistes initiated by Rusiñol, held in Sitges between 1892 and 1899. They included, among other things, an exhibition of contemporary painting following the Impressionist tradition (cats. 39–40) and a public procession in which two paintings by El Greco that Rusiñol had bought were transported in a ceremonial fashion from the Sitges train station to the Cau Ferrat (cat. 43)—an acquisition that would play an important role in the discovery of this artist as a father figure for Modernism. Performances of Symbolist plays and presentations of Catalan poetry, music, and opera were also part of the festivities (cat. 42; fig. p. 25).[11]



3 Ramon Casas, *Studio Interior,* 1883, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

In addition to the Cau Ferrat in Sitges, a new meeting place and venue for adherents of Modernisme opened in the city of Barcelona. Modeled on the Parisian cabaret-café Le Chat Noir, Els Quatre Gats (The Four Cats) opened in 1897 in the Casa Martí, designed by Puig i Cadafalch (fig. p. 194).[12] In this café, young and still unknown artists such as Isidre Nonell, Joaquim Mir, Ricard Canals, and Pablo Picasso had some of their first experiences exhibiting works.[13] As at the Festes Modernistes, the shows developed for the café combined literature with music, marionette theater, painting, and drawing—bringing to life the ideal of unifying the arts.[14] The emblematic painting that Casas created for Els Quatre Gats (cat. 82) also crosses genre boundaries: His depiction of himself and Pere Romeu on a tandem bicycle elevates a contemporary genre scene to the format of a



4 Ramon Casas, *Santiago Rusiñol,* 1889, private collection

history painting, brings painting closer to drawing by reducing the palette, and—using clear black contours and nearly monochrome areas, as well as dispensing with modeling of the bodies—echoes the aesthetic of the poster. High art and popular art are fused.[15]

Between Tradition and Modernity

Hanging a programmatic painting that depicts a current trend in mobility—the bicycle—in a neo-Gothic building reflects what is probably the most striking feature of Modernisme: exploring the relationship of past and present. The inscription, removed when the painting was cut down, was "Per anar amb bicicleta no es pot dur l'esquena dreta" (You can't ride a bike with a straight back), alluding to the need to break with tradition in order to drive innovation. After Spain suffered defeat in its war with the United States in 1898, losing its status as a world power along with its last major overseas colonies, the country had reached a political low point. During this crisis, it sought to redefine its identity—a process that went hand in hand with many controversial debates and caused rifts in society. Faced with the widespread concern that opening up to Europe would mean a loss of national identity, the painter Ignacio Zuloaga sought to preserve the soul of old Spain in his paintings of the Castilian rural population, bullfighting, and flamenco dancers.[16] The works of Modernisme, by contrast, were characterized by a fusing of different cultural influences: historic and contemporary, Catalan and Spanish, as well as European and Mediterranean. They took into account Barcelona's multifaceted identity as the capital of the medieval and early modern principality of Catalonia, as a modern "northern" and Mediterranean industrial metropolis, and as "Spain's factory." An archaeological or art historical interest in artifacts and buildings was sometimes behind contemporaneous art production as well. This is manifested, for example, in Rusiñol's extensive collecting of iron and glass objects and, in Puig i Cadafalch's case, in his three-volume publication on Romanesque architecture in Catalonia.[17]

How and to what end did Modernist art and architecture evoke the past? If returning to Catalan Romanesque and Gothic, to Moorish influences in Spanish architecture and garden design, or to the folklore of Valencia conjured up their own history, it did not take the form of a learned quotation of traditional stylistic elements. It seems rather to have been an emotional approach, a poetic form of memory, a "three-dimensional search for lost time."[18] The desire to re-enchant a world beset by rationalism and materialism was articulated, for example, in the popular motif of the dragon, which, as with the aforementioned Casa Batlló, alludes to the founding myth of the city (and the victory of Christianity). Appearances of this fantastical creature include the beast on Gaudí's gate to the Güell Pavilions, small iron objects in the form of dragons in the collection at the Cau

Ferrat (cat. 38), metal fittings on furniture, the facade sculpture of Saint George as dragon slayer at the Casa Amatller, and Alexandre de Riquer's neo-Gothic retable with the same motif (*Saint George,* ca. 1904, Museu del Modernisme de Barcelona).

A dreamlike memory of Spain's former greatness is also evoked by Rusiñol's depictions of Spanish gardens like those of the Moorish Generalife in Granada and the Baroque park of the royal castle in Aranjuez (cats. 51–53). His motifs seem "to derive from a fairy-tale world," as a critic wrote in 1899 in response to an exhibition of his paintings in Paris.[19] The gardens depicted by Rusiñol were always abandoned, which fascinated him because of the simultaneity of neglect and care.[20] He thus emphasized the temporality of their scenery, celebrating the beauty of the ephemeral: In his volume *Jardins d'Espanya,* he calls on the reader to find his way there quickly, "if you want to entrust yourself for a moment with that dreamy sadness that makes you close your mind so you can dream longer."[21] On the one hand, as mirrors of the artist's mental life, the paintings are clearly under the sign of the Symbolist movement and its decadent tendencies. On the other hand, a call to keep old gardens from disappearing or being redesigned as English gardens is implicit in these images, which made them an important influence on the nationalist discourse on the garden.[22]

Also negotiating between past and present was Hermen Anglada Camarasa's study of folkloric traditions and customs. A trip to Valencia in 1904 led to a radical change in his subject matter, as farmers from that province replaced the women of the Parisian demimonde. In *Peasants from Gandía* (cat. 118), people in traditional dress and decorated horses in an equestrian procession typical of that region are arranged in the foreground like a frieze. The two-dimensionality of the composition and the emphasis on floral patterns ornamentalize the scene in a way that undermines any pictorial narrative. For Anglada Camarasa, it was not about depicting a folkloric genre scene in the manner of *costumbrismo* but rather about the decorative and aesthetic qualities of traditional jewelry, textiles, and ceramics. The impression of a stage set, the artificial lighting, and the strong, bright colors lend the work a simulated quality that takes up the aestheticism of the French Decadent movement. The result is an artificially reshaped yet timeless reality that evades any rational and analytical approach.

In discussions of the locations and (pictorial) spaces of Modernisme, the term "refuge" occurs frequently. The very name Cau Ferrat has this meaning: The Catalan word *cau* means a cave or place of refuge. Rusiñol called Els Quatre Gats "an inn for the disillusioned," a "place to cure the ills of our century,"[23]



5 Ramon Casas, *The Corpus Christi Procession Leaving the Church of Santa Maria,* ca. 1896–98, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

and his paintings of gardens were also understood as a refuge or as a remedy for Spain's misfortunes.[24] Landscapes from the island of Mallorca of the sort that Joaquim Mir painted can likewise be seen as paradisiacal alternatives to the experience of big cities (cats. 108–12).[25] The world of art performed the crucial function of serving as a place of refuge from the crises of the present.

Between Ideology, Social Criticism, and Art for Art's Sake

On the other hand, the present day and its crises became a subject of art themselves. Various intentions lay behind that, ranging from religious and ideological efforts by way of social criticism to the aestheticizing tendency of *l'art pour l'art,* or art for art's sake. The modern "ills" that manifested in Barcelona included inequality among its residents and the consequences thereof. While flourishing industry brought wealth and prosperity to the bourgeoisie, the working class suffered under miserable living and labor conditions. The growing rift between rich and poor intensified class conflict, leading to strikes, uprisings, and anarchist attacks. In 1893, a bombing at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, the city's largest opera house, took the lives of around twenty people.[26] Three years later, a Corpus Christi procession—one of the most important religious traditions in Spain—became the target of an attack, with twelve dead and many more injured. Casas painted a large-format, aestheticized version of the procession as it left the church (fig. 5). In the final painting, however, he did not show the explosion of the bomb, which can only be seen in the study (cat. 60).[27] A depiction of an event without the event, it drew from the moral, didactic claim of history painting to convey meaning—which, despite the overview of the action, leaves the viewer baffled, like the crowd of people in the picture.[28]



6 Isidre Nonell, *Hardship,* 1904,
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

Casas's works are sometimes difficult to categorize, since he was politically engaged[29] but also frequently placed, at least aesthetically, with the movement of art for art's sake. Gaudí, by contrast, clearly put art at the service of religion. In the late 1890s, he joined the Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc, which espoused a rigid Catholicism to distinguish itself from the "bohemian" art of other Modernists, which it regarded as frivolous.[30] Gaudí's continuation of the building of Sagrada Família (Holy Family), which, because it was financed exclusively by donations and alms, is known as the "cathedral of the poor," functioned as a symbol of redemption: It was supposed to liberate the "city of bombs" from its sins.[31]

The Cathedral of the Poor (see cat. 18; fig. p. 42) is also the title of a work by Mir, painted at the construction site with Gaudí's permission. This picture is close to both Impressionism and Realism and shows a group of figures in the shadowy foreground, alluding to the Holy Family, with the father extending a hand to the viewer as though begging for alms. These people seem far from the redemption that this half-finished building in transcendent light promises. The social injustices in Barcelona—above all poverty and the exclusion of the Gitanos, the Roma of Spain—are also the focus of the paintings of Isidre Nonell, though he struck a gloomier and more critical tone (fig. 6; cats. 75, 77–80, 136–37; figs. pp. 16, 52). Nonell broke radically with the romantic notion of the Spanish woman as an exotic, temperamental, seductively dancing Gitana, a stereotype common throughout Europe following the success of Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*. Nonell's protagonists are usually Catalan women, frequently appearing alone, introspective, and sitting with their backs turned, whose shadowy existence on the margins of society finds expression in dark, reduced compositions. These melancholic works, which lay between genre painting and typological portraits, can be understood as a response to the bourgeois portrait while also representing a contrast to the modern crowd scenes of Casas in their monumentalizing of the single figure. After Nonell's exhibition at the Sala Parés in 1903 met with general bafflement, with critics describing his subjects as animalistic and degenerate, he refused to present his works publicly for many years.[32]



7 Santiago Rusiñol, *The Pawnshop,* 1889, exhibited in Berlin in 1891 under the title *A Courtyard,* Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges, Santiago Rusiñol Collection



8 Ramon Casas, *Sewing (Woman in a Red Dress),* 1889, exhibited in Berlin in 1891 under the title *At Work,* private collection

Reception in Germany

Most of the other artists of the group took advantage of various national and international opportunities to make their work known. They were most present at shows in Paris, but they also took part in many exhibitions in Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, and Argentina. Only Casas, Rusiñol, and Anglada Camarasa have thus far been documented as having participated in shows in Germany, where their names remain largely forgotten today.

Works of Catalan Modernisme were probably first shown in Germany at the *Internationale Kunstausstellung zu Berlin* in 1891: Rusiñol exhibited five paintings there, including a portrait of Miquel Utrillo (cat. 25) and *A Courtyard,* now known by the title *The Pawnshop* (fig. 7),[33] while Casas was represented by two works: *At Work,* now known as *Sewing (Woman in a Red Dress)* (fig. 8), and *Portrait of a Lady,* for which he received a small gold medal. In a review, the art historian Jaro Springer remarked that the Spaniards "in no way wish to remember their great past in art; they are modern in every respect."[34] He writes of a separate "School of Barcelona," distinguished by its determination, though it extends far beyond the circle of the Modernists, and he praises the works of Casas and Rusiñol for successfully reproducing light and air.[35] This assigning of the two artists to the Barcelona School, which differed from the Spanish-Roman School in its orientation toward Parisian models, continued at the *Internationale Kunstausstellung* in Berlin of 1896. There, the painters again presented two works each, though two paintings of women by Casas, presumably identified by the Spanish names Angustias and Amparo, were listed under the titles *In Angst* (In Fear) and *Gut geschützt* (Well Protected), owing to translation errors.[36] Another event painting by the artist, *Garrote* (1894, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), could be seen at the *VIII. Internationale Kunstausstellung* at the Königlicher Glaspalast in Munich in 1901 and, in the following year, at the *Jubiläums-Kunstausstellung* in Karlsruhe. In Munich, it was awarded a First Class medal. The "exquisite" painting—"delighting all the painters," as one reviewer wrote[37]—is further evidence of how Casas's paintings aestheticize events, as could already be observed in his *Corpus Christi*.

Between 1901 and 1911, Anglada Camarasa exhibited several times at the Kunstsalon Eduard Schulte in both Berlin and Cologne, at the Berlin and the Munich Secession—he was also a corresponding member of the latter—and in other shows in Bremen, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Leipzig, and Munich.[38] The Paris-based artist was not placed in the context of Barcelona but usually stereotyped as a Spaniard generally and sometimes also seen as a Frenchman. As early as 1902, and thus even before Anglada Camarasa's folkloric phase, the critic Hans Rosenhagen referred to his influence on Kandinsky: "Wassily Kandinsky (Munich) is imitating the Spaniard Anglada, not without success."[39] In addition to paintings of animals and flamenco dancers, scenes of decadent Parisian nightlife dominated, characterized by garish, artificial lighting effects that echoed the new electric lighting of the entertainment venues (fig. 9). Anglada Camarasa often

employed blurriness as well: Doing so evokes the fleeting nature of encounters at night and the rush of alcohol and drug consumption, or dissolves the materiality of dancers' bodies into light and movement. Because the images resist clear legibility, they become atmospheric spaces that generate an emotional appeal. This is evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive reviews, despite the sometimes drastic themes, which outdid each other in eloquent descriptions of Anglada Camarasa's works: He was praised as an "orgiast of color,"[40] as a "great pyrotechnician of modern French painting";[41] his painting *Gitana Dance* (cat. 117) is a "feat of lighting,"[42] and the painting *Firefly* (*Lucciola,* 1904, Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm) is "visionary, phantom-like."[43] "It groans and cries out and whispers and exhales. Satanism and Dyonism [*sic*, presumably Dionysianism] and the most modern shivering of nerves is expressed by the palette."[44] One critic lamented in the *Kunstchronik* in 1903, on the occasion of an exhibition at the Kunstsalon Eduard Schulte, that Anglada Camarasa's pictures of Parisian nightlife had nothing pleasant about them: "Old, utterly worn-out libertines disfigured by passion and faded courtesans, human ruins whose corpse-like color makes them seem more dead than alive—in short, the swampy, worm-eaten, the contaminated—that is the realm from which this painter gets his models—with, it seems, a special penchant for it."[45]

Until Anglada Camarasa turned to motifs from Spanish folklore in 1904, his painting, dominated by Parisian themes, was less suited than the works of his countrymen Joaquín Sorolla and Zuloaga to serve as exotic, romanticizing images of yearning for a sunny and pleasant "white" or an archaic and gloomy "black" Spain that were so popular with the German public. This makes it even clearer that the scenes were anchored in the European Decadent movement and in an aestheticism that celebrates the artificial. Perhaps it was precisely an engagement with such a wide variety of new developments—be it technological innovations such as electric light, European cultural currents from the turn of the century, or the circle of Modernists in Barcelona—that heightened awareness of one's own identity and thus made it possible to develop an independent artistic style. This unmistakable visual idiom is also characteristic of other artists of the second generation of Modernisme such as Nonell and Mir. They helped shape a movement that—rooted in Barcelona's sociopolitical, urbanist, and cultural past and present, and inspired by the achievements of various epochs and cultures worldwide—came to develop an identity all its own.

Translated from German by Steven Lindberg



9 Hermen Anglada Camarasa, *The White Ball,* ca. 1900, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

[1] William H. Robinson and Carmen Belen Lord, "Barcelona and Modernity," in Cleveland 2006, 2–19, esp. 7.

[2] When the prohibition on trade with the United States was lifted in 1778, the textile industry experienced a rapid boom. In 1833, the first steam-powered textile factory in Spain went into operation in Barcelona. See ibid., 6.

[3] See Domènech i Montaner 1878.

[4] The name clearly alludes to the "apple of discord" of the judgment of Paris in Greek mythology, in which the prince was to choose the most beautiful of the three goddesses Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena; it also refers to the Spanish word *manzana*, meaning both "apple" and "block of buildings," and hence to the competition between the three architects for the most spectacular building.

[5] See Umbach 2009, 97.

[6] Esther Raventós-Pons, "Gaudí's Architecture: A Poetic Form," in *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 35,4, "Literature & Architecture" (December 2002), 199–212, here 207.

[7] *L'Avens* 3,22 (January 15, 1884), supplement, unpaginated [3]. On the journal, see also Sala 2007, 15–74, here 36–40. On the concept of Modernisme, see Carmen Belen Lord, "The New Art: Modernisme," in Cleveland 2006, 34–41, here 35–36.

[8] In 1890, the first group exhibition of Santiago Rusiñol, Ramon Casas, and the sculptor Enric Clarasó was held at the Sala Parés. See Sala Parés, https://salapares.com/heritage/ (accessed May 23, 2026).

[9] On the Cau Ferrat, see the contributions by Ignasi Domènech i Vives and Charlotte Garrido Ewers in this volume, 20–29 and 122–27, respectively.

[10] See Anke Finger, *Das Gesamtkunstwerk der Moderne,* Göttingen 2006, 11.

[11] As part of the fifth Festa Modernista in 1899, Rusiñol's lyric-dramatic play *L'alegria que passa* (The Joy That Passes; cat. 42) with music by Enric Morera premiered. Rusiñol uses a circus troupe visiting a village marked by monotony to illustrate the conflict between aesthetic idealism and the materialist values of bourgeois society. On the Festes Modernistes, see also the contribution by Ignasi Domènech i Vives in this volume, 20–29, here 23–25.

[12] On Els Quatre Gats, see the contribution by Gabriel Pinós in this volume, 192–97.

[13] See Barcelona 2005.

[14] Ramon Pinyol i Torrents, "Els Quatre Gats: Un centre literari modernista," in ibid., 267–69, here 267.

[15] See Quílez Corella 2019, 344–45.

[16] See Ignacio Zuloaga, "Jean Claude: Un illuminé de génie; Il faut souffrir pour concevoir une œuvre," in *Le Petit Parisien* (May 20, 1914), German translation in *Mythos Spanien: Ignacio Zuloaga,* exh. cat., Kunsthalle München, Munich 2023, 7.

[17] Josep Puig y Cadafalch et al., *L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya,* 3 vols., Barcelona 1909–18.

[18] Maiken Umbach expressed it thus in reference to the buildings of Puig i Cadafalch. See Umbach 2009, 99.

[19] G., "Sammlungen und Ausstellungen," in *Kunstchronik* (December 14, 1899), 122. The exhibition was held at Siegfried Bing's Maison de l'Art Nouveau.

[20] Josep de C. Laplana, "Los jardines de Santiago Rusiñol," in Madrid 1999, 51–69, here 55.

[21] Santiago Rusiñol, "Jardins d'Espanya," in *Pèl & Ploma* 100 (December 1903), 362–66, here 366.

[22] See Tito Rojo 2015, 179–80, and the contribution by Franziska Stöhr in this volume, 142–47.

[23] Quoted in Princeton 1978, 18.

[24] See Tito Rojo 2015, 178.

[25] On this, see the contributions by Nadia Hernández Henche and Jasmin Gierling in this volume, 40–49 and 218–23, respectively.

[26] See Sala 2007, 51.

[27] On the painting, see Cano Díaz 2024. It is possible that depicting the attack came to seem too risky to Casas. In addition, he dispensed with the historical accuracy for the site of the explosion that he had chosen for the study. See ibid., 173–74.

[28] On Casas's painting, see also the contribution by Francesc Quílez Corella in this volume, 160–65, here 163–64.

[29] See Cano Díaz 2024.

[30] On the Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc, see Sala 2007, 54–55.

[31] Irene Gras, Montserrat Pérez, and Teresa-M. Sala, "The Masses and the Setmana Tràgica," in Amsterdam 2007, 161–70, here 164.

[32] On the discourse on criminology and degeneration in reference to Nonell's painting, see Dorofeeva 2016.

[33] The other paintings were *A "Bohemian"* (as titled in the exhibition catalog, now known as *The Moulin de la Galette,* 1890, private collection), *Anxious Moments* (*The Sick Man and the Care Giver,* 1890, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges), and *Reading* (1890, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges). See *Internationale Kunst-Ausstellung: Katalog,* Berlin 1891, 185.

[34] Springer 1891, 330.

[35] See ibid. In 1893, Rusiñol showed four paintings in the *Münchener Jahresausstellung von Kunstwerken aller Nationen* at the Glaspalast: *Domestic Scene (Spain),* unidentified; *In the Hospital Courtyard (Spain),* now known as *Entrance to Vinyet, Sitges* (cat. 39); *The Final Prescription* (1892–93, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges); *Young Girl,* unidentified. See *Illustrirter Katalog der Münchener Jahresausstellung von Kunstwerken aller Nationen im Kgl. Glaspalaste 1893,* Munich 1893, 70.

[36] This led to the error in the literature of identifying the latter painting as Casas's *The Embarkment of the Troops (Press-Ganging on the Beach of Barcelona;* cat. 59). See Cano Díaz 2024, 171. Rusiñol presented *Tomb in the Cathedral of Tarragona* (1884, private collection; see Laplana/Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan 2004, vol. 3, 25, no. 3.12: *Sant Sepulcre. Tarragona*) and *Little Girl with Hortensias,* now known as *The Cobbler's Hydrangeas* (cat. 40). See *Internationale Kunst-Aus*stellung Berlin 1896: Katalog, Berlin 1896, 104.

[37] Anonymous, "Die Karlsruher Jubiläums-Kunstausstellung," in *Die Kunst für alle* 17 (July 15, 1902), 467–73, here 470.

[38] For a list of Hermen Anglada Camarasa's exhibitions, see Cristina Ribot Bayé, "Hermenegild Anglada Camarasa," in *Diccionari d'artistes catalans, valencians i balears,* https://artistes.iec.cat/artista.asp?id=226 (accessed May 31, 2026). Not all of his participations in exhibitions in Germany are listed there, however.

[39] Hans Rosenhagen, "Die fünfte Ausstellung der Berliner Secession," in *Die Kunst für alle* 19 (July 1, 1902), 433–43, here 443.

[40] Kuzmany 1905, 471.

[41] Habich 1903, 468.

[42] Ibid., fig. *Gitana-Tanz* (Gitana Dance), 478.

[43] Ibid., 468.

[44] B. Z. 1904, 142.

[45] Warncke 1903, col. 206.

Ignasi Domènech i Vives

From Collection to Gesamtkunstwerk: The Cau Ferrat as a Laboratory of Modernisme



1 Guillem Fernández-Huerta, *Grand Hall of the Cau Ferrat,*
Archivo del Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges

With the Cau Ferrat in Sitges, near Barcelona, the artist and writer Santiago Rusiñol created a home and studio that evolved into a cultural institution of the first rank. Coinciding with the emergence of Catalan Modernisme at the end of the nineteenth century, the Cau Ferrat formed an intersection between life, the production of art, and cultural activities and reflected Rusiñol's commitment to that movement. His house and collections were not just an accumulation of objects for a future museum; they should be understood as his personal project, a Gesamtkunstwerk intended to speak to the public and transform the relationship between art, artists, and society (fig. p. 127).[1] The present essay sheds light on the role the Cau Ferrat played as a "laboratory of Modernisme" that established and spread a cultural movement.

The collections of the Cau Ferrat are in harmony with the aesthetic, symbolic, and ideological ideas of Modernisme. With them, Rusiñol constructed a visual and material narrative intended both to revive the art of the past and to recognize the value of applied arts and artisanal work as a counter to the homogenizing effects of industrialization. Its collections served as instruments of knowledge, of aesthetic education, and as an expression of identity, thus helping to establish an alternative artistic canon that made sensibility, life experience, and the ethical dimension of art the center of creative activity.

The concept for the collections and space of the Cau Ferrat offered a stage for encounters as well as cultural events and celebrations. These included the Festes Modernistes, or "Modernisme Festivals," which were conceived as symbolic, performative acts that combined art, literature, music, and social life and made an essential contribution to the spread and consolidation of Modernisme as a cultural movement. The Cau Ferrat thus became a place of celebration and of legitimation, where art was not simply viewed but lived, shared, and honored as a driving force of cultural renewal (fig. 1).



2 Door knocker from the Archdeacon's House in Barcelona, ca. 1500, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges

The Beginnings of the Collection

Santiago Rusiñol was born in Barcelona in 1861. As the son of a bourgeois family of Catalan textile manufacturers, he grew up in a city characterized by upheaval in which protest movements—first against the monarchy and church and then against the industrial bourgeoisie—turned its streets into veritable battlefields. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Barcelona's industrialization was concentrated within the medieval walls, where factories, workshops, and housing were crammed together. The lack of air and light, the constant noise, the growing population, and the absence of regulation during early industrial capitalism turned the city into a social pressure cooker, creating tensions within the working classes and revealing the limitations of the old city walls. The lower classes turned against the Church, which in their view contributed significantly to their miserable living conditions. The burning and destruction of churches and convents was common. Moreover, the Spanish government expropriated and sold off the majority of the Church's properties. This was one of the causes of the deterioration of ecclesiastical cultural assets. Already as a youth, Rusiñol had shown an interest in the city's cultural heritage, and this curiosity became the foundation of his artistic education and led him to form a collection of his own.[2]

In the early part of his life, the painter spent time in a part of the medieval city that lay in ruins. He began to collect the ceramic items and cast-iron hardware that had once decorated homes there.



3 Estudio Napoleón, *Santiago Rusiñol,* 1892, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges

Rusiñol was expected to take over the family business, but he had other plans. At fifteen, he enrolled in a small academy that the painter Tomàs Moragas had founded in Barcelona. Children of the city's bourgeoisie did not attend the Escuela de Artes y Oficios (School of Arts and Crafts), where orphans under the care of the church and children of the lower classes studied. Young people of means received training in the studios of famous artists. Moragas introduced Rusiñol not only to the world of drawing and painting but also to that of collecting. He had shared a studio with the painter Mariano Fortuny in Rome. That studio was a true museum of antiquities,[3] which the artist had acquired in order to paint them and thus lend his works a veristic quality. Fortuny and Moragas, who painted in a similar style, were members of the first generation of painters who collected, pioneers in the history of artisanal crafts, which at the time had yet to be written down and systematized. The first drawings that the young Rusiñol showed in the *Exposición de Bellas Artes* in Girona in 1881 portray old cast-iron work from Catalonia, some of which would become part of his collection years later (fig. 2).[4]

The story of how the young Rusiñol got from behind the counter of his family's business into the world of art can be read in the novel he published in 1907, *L'auca del senyor Esteve*,[5] which has autobiographical qualities and ten years later was turned into a successful play. Rusiñol tells the story of a young man who feels his calling as a sculptor, but his family does not want to free him of his obligations to the family business. In the end, the protagonist is liberated by his grandfather and then turns to art.

That is also the story of the young Rusiñol, who had lost his parents and whose grandfather ultimately agreed to let him dedicate himself to painting. From that moment on, when the painter was seventeen, he enrolled in associations for scientific excursions which, together with his stay in Moragas's workshop, would turn out to be the best school he could have attended. On the list of members of the Associació Catalanista d'Excursions Científiques, which Rusiñol joined in 1878, his name appears after that of the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, who enrolled on the same day. The young painter also joined the Associació d'Excursions Catalana in 1881. These two associations brought together representatives of a wide variety of professions: architects, physicians, lawyers, and many more. They organized excursions in the surrounding area and collected samples of flora and fauna, took photographs or made drawings of cultural assets, and presented their studies at meetings in which such figures as the architects Antoni Gaudí and Domènech i Montaner as well as young artists like Rusiñol took part (fig. 3).[6]

In this way, Rusiñol gained firsthand knowledge of Catalan artistic heritage and participated in creating the scholarly study of his country's art history. Years later, Rusiñol financed the first systematic research in the history of artistic ironwork in Catalonia, written by the artist Lluís Labarta.[7]

The collections that Rusiñol kept in his studio—which he shared with his friend the sculptor Enric Clarasó (cat. 35)—gradually became so important that this first Cau Ferrat in Barcelona was honored by an official visit from members of the Associació Catalanista d'Excursions Científiques in March 1887.[8] There the painter came up with the name for the place where he assembled his collections, the most important of which was that of old cast iron: *cau,* which is Catalan for "cave" or "refuge," and "Ferrat," which derives from the word *ferro,* or "iron." It was thus a cave or refuge of iron.[9] This collection of old cast iron had been assembled with the help of Rusiñol's

friends, as he explained in his lecture on January 21, 1893, at the Ateneu Barcelonès cultural society. He also explained why he considered his passion for collecting an incurable disease. This lecture, titled "Mis hierros viejos" (My Old Irons), was programmatic. Rusiñol presented his collection as an essential part of his life that revealed his worldview. The trip into the past on which these objects took him could not be equated with the historicizing gaze of an archaeologist but rather served to provide the present with tools for the future. Rusiñol remarked: "The art of Modernisme tends to drink from primitive springs where water flows that is pure and free of all affectation." The voyage these objects invite us on represents a look back at those times before "the machines with their cold precision dealt a death blow to the intelligent work of a whole generation of artists who loved the intimacy of form."[10]

Rusiñol and Clarasó's studio became a place where contemporary art met tradition. It also transformed into a meeting spot for young people who, like Rusiñol, wanted to reshape the cultural life of the city. The Cau Ferrat became the mouthpiece of its founder and disseminated his aesthetic views.

The Festes Modernistes

In October 1891, Rusiñol moved to Sitges, a coastal village with around 3,000 inhabitants forty kilometers southwest of Barcelona, where his friends Ramon Casas and Eliseo Meifrén were painting. An artists' colony had formed in Sitges at the time. Painters stayed in the village for extended periods and made the people and the landscape the protagonists of their works.[11] They were of a similar mind to the Skagen painters in Denmark, the Barbizon school in France, and the Macchiaioli in Italy. Rusiñol, who had intended to come only for a short visit, remained in the village for three months, painted, and decided to look for a house in town.

At the suggestion of Rusiñol and the Modernist circle, the Festes Modernistes were held in Sitges between 1892 and 1899. The first festival, dedicated to painting, was an exhibition of the Luminist school of Sitges and other contemporary artists shown in the town hall on August 23, 1892. This occasion was the first in a series of cultural events that transformed Sitges into a laboratory for artistic and intellectual renewal. They were conceived as an interplay of painting, literature, music, theater, and aesthetic debates and offered Spanish Modernism a forum and a space for



4 Guillem Fernández-Huerta, *Ground Floor of the Cau Ferrat,* Archivo del Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges

a new generation of creative minds that broke with academism and claimed artistic freedom and cosmopolitanism for itself. The performative character of the Festes—with literary soirées, exhibitions, banquets, and the symbolic inauguration of the recently completed Cau Ferrat in 1894—made Sitges a focus of Modernism and contributed to redefining the role of art in public life in Spain during the late nineteenth century.

The second festival was celebrated on September 10, 1893, at the cultural organization Casino Prado and was dedicated to the theater and music of Symbolism. The Catalan composer Enric Morera gave a concert of his own works and those of other composers such as the Belgian César Franck, David Popper from Bohemia, and the Frenchman Benjamin Godard. The play *L'Intruse* (The Intruder) by Maurice Maeterlinck, the favorite author of the Modernists, was also performed. The script was translated by Pompeu Fabra, and the art critic Raimon Casellas and Rusiñol appeared as actors.

As part of the third Festa Modernista, which focused on literature and was held on November 4, 1894, the new Cau Ferrat in Sitges was inaugurated. Rusiñol had carried out his plan to build a home there. He had purchased two small fishing huts that at the time were still outside the village and commissioned his friend the architect Francesc Rogent to design a house. It was intended above all to exhibit his collections, many of which he had already moved from Barcelona (fig. 4).

At the housewarming, Rusiñol presented two works by Doménikos Theotokópoulos, known as El Greco, that he had acquired in Paris (cat. 43). In a solemn procession, the paintings were brought from the local train station to the Cau Ferrat on the backs of two horses, followed by dozens of artists, poets, composers, writers, and journalists (fig. 5).

Rusiñol and the Basque artist Ignacio Zuloaga played a crucial role in that painter's rediscovery. El Greco was from Crete, but, following a sojourn in Italy, he lived and worked in Spain beginning in 1577. By the end of the nineteenth century, he had still not been accepted into the academic canon. Rusiñol made El Greco the intellectual reference point of the aesthetic project of the Cau Ferrat, where the presence of the two paintings had a fundamental significance. He tied Catalan Modernisme to a visionary, unconventional, and profoundly subjective artistic tradition.[12] Zuloaga contributed decisively to the vindication of El Greco, operating in parallel from Castile: first, by means of his artistic reception of his role model and, second, through his activity as a collector and cultural mediator.



5 Lluís Labarta, *The Procession of El Greco's Paintings (The Third Festa Modernista),* 1894, private collection

He proposed a reading of El Greco's work as an expression of the spiritual and tragic soul of Spain. As part of the Regeneracionismo debates over renewal around 1900, the rediscovery of El Greco spread through the entire country. It found solid intellectual support in fundamental works such as Manuel Bartolomé Cossío's book *El Greco* (1908),[13] which provided the art historical basis for the modern revaluation of the painter, and the symbolic, spiritual interpretations of Maurice Barrès, which contributed decisively to the international dissemination of the modern myth of the painter.[14]

In El Greco's works, Rusiñol saw a synthesis of mysticism, expressiveness, and formal freedom that he himself aspired to embody: a painter misunderstood in his day but endowed with a superior vision that defied academic norms. The intensity of color, the expressively elongated figures, and the spiritual verticality of his compositions became for Rusiñol symbols of authenticity and an "inner" art that did not hold to the conventions of dominant realism. His passionate advocacy of El Greco in writings and at conferences and his establishment of a cult around the painter enabled him to articulate a genealogy of Modernisme in which the mission of art was a moral and emotional elevation, and in which Rusiñol was able to position himself as an intellectual heir of that "cursed," visionary genius.

The fourth Festa Modernista took place on February 14, 1897, at the Casino Prado and was dedicated to Catalan musical theater. Enric Morera's Symbolist opera *La fada* (The Fairy), with a libretto by Jaume Massó i Torrents, premiered (fig. 6). The fifth Festa Modernista was celebrated at the El Retiro art society on July 5, 1899, with a piano recital by Joaquín Nin and pieces by Morera, Joan Gay, Francesc Alió, Edvard Grieg, and Domenico Scarlatti. Other works premiered included *Lladres* (Thieves) by Ignasi Iglésias as well as his *La reina del cor* (The Queen of the Heart), and Rusiñol's *L'alegria que passa* (The Joy That Passes; cat. 42), both with music by Morera.

The Cau Ferrat gradually transformed into a laboratory of Modernisme and the site of a cult of which Rusiñol was the high priest. He proposed erecting a monument to El Greco in Sitges.[15] The painter and collector explained to the residents of the village—the majority of whom were fishers and farmers—the need to fund a memorial to a painter who had represented creative freedom in the past. The realization of this project with the help of dozens of local people who did not even know who this artist was demonstrates Rusiñol's charisma and the fascination he exerted on the citizens of Sitges. The monument was the first in Spain dedicated to El Greco; it can still be seen today



6 Miquel Utrillo, *Poster for "La fada"*, 1897, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges

on the beach promenade of Sitges (fig. 7; fig. p. 124). The one in Toledo, where the painter had his career, was not erected until sixteen years later, in 1914, on the occasion of the tricentennial of his death. Rusiñol had been able to fill the people of Sitges with enthusiasm in part because he let them participate in the activities around the Cau Ferrat and the plays, poetry readings, and concerts he organized, thus nipping any suspicion of elitism in the bud. Among the performances that drew the entire village together was the Serpentine Dance, presented at the local festival in 1895 in front of the Cau Ferrat, on a wooden platform anchored to the seabed. Inspired by a performance by Loïe Fuller he had seen in Paris, Rusiñol arranged for the dance to be performed by another dancer on that August evening. The dancer was illuminated from the shore, where the inhabitants of Sitges watched the performance, fascinated.[16]

The Emergence of a Cult Figure

Already during his lifetime, a public image of Rusiñol emerged that became very popular and spread widely. Anecdotes from his life contributed to this image, as did his sarcastic, ironic, and often self-critical humor, as well as the attitude he projected in certain social and cultural contexts. Among the most formative events were his two trips by mule-drawn cart through Catalonia in 1889 and 1892, which soon provided material for stories, commentaries, and literary retellings.[17] His experiences on these journeys, the chance encounters, the discomforts endured with humor, and the absurd and grotesque situations circulated widely and consolidated an image of an approachable, ironic, and antiheroic artist. The witty, bohemian, and caustic Rusiñol—repeatedly a topic at social gatherings and in chronicles and caricature—thus transformed into a famous, almost theatrical figure who coexisted with the intellectually rigorous artist, with the seriousness of his aesthetic ideas, and with his melancholic sensitivity. The Cau Ferrat was the stage on which this double role became apparent, including the discipline of the modern artist on the one hand, and the embodiment of his own myth on the other, and this contributed significantly to making him a cultural icon.

From 1894 until Rusiñol's death, the Cau Ferrat was considered a veritable museum. The painter, who stayed briefly in the village now and again, opened the house to everyone who wanted to see it. After his many activities in Sitges and throughout the country, and after he had become a celebrated dramatist by the end of the nineteenth century, he was so famous that more and more people visited, and the Cau Ferrat became a kind of pilgrimage site. Visitors found a collection of collections in the house: works by colleagues who had been Rusiñol's companions on the path to



7 Joaquim de Dalmau, *View of the Beach and the Boardwalk in Sitges, Featuring the Monument to El Greco,* 1900, Archivo Histórico de Sitges

a revival of Spanish art, including Zuloaga, Casas (cat. 36), Ramon Pichot, and Hermen Anglada Camarasa. The collection of contemporary paintings and sculptures included works by young artists such as Pablo Picasso (fig. 8) and the sculptor Manolo Hugué, who were still unknown when Rusiñol exhibited their works in the Cau Ferrat. But he had faith in their talent and their great futures.[18] In his house in Sitges, Rusiñol also showed works by his wife, Lluïsa Denís, an amateur painter who exhibited her paintings occasionally, though few of them are known today; he also showed pieces by his daughter, María Rusiñol, who painted ceramics and porcelain in her youth. The objects, still on view there today, include ceramic works decorated by both women, presented next to works by renowned artists of their day and famous names from art history such as El Greco. Also on view in the Cau Ferrat are copies of Italian and Flemish medieval and Renaissance paintings, works by Casas and Rusiñol (figs. 9, 10), photographs that Rusiñol acquired on his travels, and collections of furniture, ceramics, and glass. On the walls of the Cau Ferrat, a significant number of old paintings hang next to new ones, without order or hierarchy, because for their founder they all conveyed beauty and truth in equal measure.

Beginning in 1907, Rusiñol was subjected to systematic criticism from Eugeni d'Ors, who coined the term Noucentisme and was a leading representative of that neoclassical movement, which followed Modernisme. In his column under the pseudonym Xènius in the newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya*, he attacked the Modernist legacy that Rusiñol represented. The name "Xènius," derived from "genius," referred to the normative, ordering spirit that embodied the principle of intellectual power. D'Ors was thus putting himself in the role of a higher authority dictating aesthetic and moral laws down from the lectern. "Xènius" was a doctrinaire mask: the name stood for a dogmatic system, for the hierarchy and classicism that defined Noucentisme. D'Ors believed that Modernisme was an art determined by subjectivity, by the bohemian life, and by individual pathos, which the new aesthetic ideology regarded as washed up. Rusiñol responded to these accusations in the weekly newspaper *La Esquella de la Torratxa* under the pseudonym Xarau—a popular colloquial term full of ironic and carnivalesque resonances. Xarau wished neither to exercise authority nor to establish a doctrine but rather to undermine the discourse of his opponent through mockery, humor, and lived experience and to reaffirm his conception of art tied to individual freedom, bohemia, and modernist subjectivity. He did not refer to Xènius's abstract norms but rather to the street, the bar, and the theater of life.

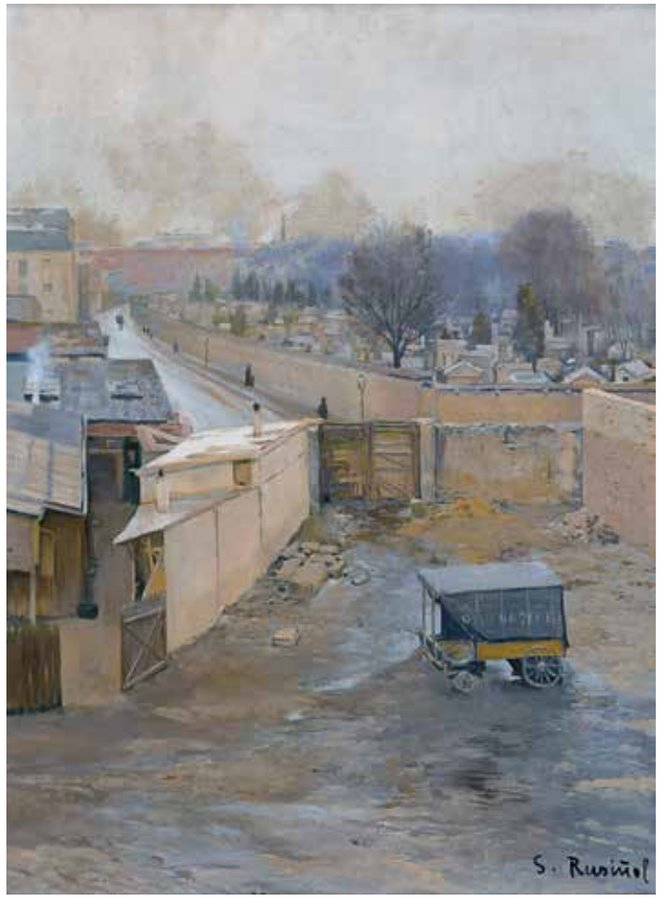
Over time, however, the meaning of this debate was inverted. The great homage to Rusiñol during his lifetime, celebrated in Sitges in January 1926, marked a turning point, and the contentious figure became recognized and admired in Catalan intellectual circles. At this highly symbolic, ritual-like event, the



8 Pablo Picasso, *The Bullfight (El quite)*, 1900, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges



9 Ramon Casas, *Dance at the Moulin de la Galette,* 1900, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges, Santiago Rusiñol Collection



10 Santiago Rusiñol, *The Montmartre Cemetery, Paris,* 1891, Museu del Cau Ferrat, Sitges

mythical image of Rusiñol emerged as the intellectual father of Modernisme, universal artist, and mediator between art and life, whose career was no longer seen as a controversial episode but as the heroic foundational phase of contemporary Catalan culture.

On June 13, 1931, Rusiñol died in Aranjuez, near Madrid, where he had wanted to paint the gardens of the royal palace. His body was brought to Barcelona, and when the train reached Sitges, its residents stopped it, opened the car carrying his coffin, and covered it with carnations. Two days later, the painter's will was read, in which he had decreed that the Cau Ferrat and all his collections should go to the people of Sitges. A few days later, the Asociación del Ram de tot l'any (Association of the Year-Round Bouquet) was founded in the village: a group of women who three times a week place a bouquet of flowers on the desk in the study of the Cau Ferrat beneath the portrait of the artist that Ramon Casas painted in 1928. The association has done so without interruption since 1931, not even stopping during the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939 or during the Covid-19 pandemic at the beginning of the 2020s.

Rusiñol's funeral in Barcelona resembled a mass demonstration. Many thousands of people accompanied the hearse through the streets of the city—people of all social classes and the most important representatives of the Catalan government.[19] Three months earlier, the Second Spanish Republic had been founded, restoring autonomous government to Catalonia. The members of this government were proponents of the ideals of the Noucentist intellectuals, and it was they who ultimately turned the Cau Ferrat into a public museum. Joaquim Folch i Torres, the director of the Barcelona museums, assembled a team that cataloged all the collections, and the museum opened its doors in June 1933.[20]

The Cau Ferrat remains an important reference point for an understanding of Catalan Modernisme, and its collections, which are still presented as its founder arranged them, continue to lend visibility to the ideas of the painter and dramatist—ideas that have become a mythical space of Spanish culture.

Translated from German by Steven Lindberg

[1] See Salamanca 2011.

[2] Josep de C. Laplana and Mercedes Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan remind us that at the age of twelve Rusiñol sent a letter to Emilio Castelar, the president of the First Spanish Republic, to ask him to prevent the demolition of the Iglesia de Belén on Las Ramblas in Barcelona, which was being done to align the street grid. See Laplana/Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan 2004, vol. 1, 24.

[3] Carlos G. Navarro, "La historia domesticada: Fortuny y el coleccionismo de antigüedades," in *Fortuny (1838–1874),* exh. cat., Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid 2017, 373–97.

[4] See Domènech i Vives 2007.

[5] An auca is a specific form of traditional Catalan popular print: a sheet containing a sequence of illustrated scenes, traditionally arranged in individual panels and often accompanied by rhyming couplets (rodolins), which together narrate a story, a biography, an event, or another subject.

[6] See Domènech i Vives 2009.

[7] Lluís Labarta, *Hierros artísticos: Colección de láminas representando los más notables trabajos de forja, particularmente los debidos a los maestros castellanos y catalanes,* Barcelona 1901.

[8] See Vinyoles 1887.

[9] See Domènech i Vives 2006.

[10] Years later, the lecture was published by the publisher El Eco de Sitges. See Rusiñol 1900, 39, 18.

[11] See Sitges 2004.

[12] See Barcelona 2014b.

[13] See Cossío 1908.

[14] See Storm 2016.

[15] See Panyella 2003, 305–9.

[16] See Laplana/Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan 2004, vol. 1, 58.

[17] See Panyella 2003, 88–91; Panyella 2017.

[18] See Domènech i Vives 2019.

[19] See Anonymous 1931.

[20] See Domènech i Vives 2013; Panyella 2013.

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The Abandoned Gardens of Spain: On the Poetics of the Vegetal in the Literature and Painting of Santiago Rusiñol