

Barcelona Art Nouveau in a Nordic Perspective

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Received 2025-05-26; accepted 2025-07-21

Keywords

Art Nouveau, Barcelona,
Gaudi, Domènech i
Montaner, Sagnier i
Villavecchia.

Abstract

The capital of Catalonia, Barcelona, is one of the most famous centres of Art Nouveau architecture in the history of art. The name of the city is usually associated with the names of the most famous architects of this style – Antoni Gaudí i Cornet, Josep Puig i Cadafalch and Lluís Domènech i Montaner, but a whole galaxy of talented architects worked there, who made a significant contribution to the development of regional architecture. There are several thousand Art Nouveau buildings in Barcelona; however, Art Nouveau dominates the cityscape of this huge city only in certain places. Barcelona's Art Nouveau reflects the ubiquitous formal language of the style, but it is mostly interpreted in the context of local cultural traditions, acquiring a distinct regional flavour. The articulation of the facades of many Art Nouveau buildings in Barcelona, especially the glazed bay windows, which usually rise almost the entire height of the facade, gives this style a uniqueness found only in Barcelona, which simultaneously reflects both the artistic creativity, construction and structural innovations of its time, and the embodiment of national identity. Art Nouveau, or modernism, is a testament to the pride and creative abilities of the Catalan people. The aim of the article is to reveal the specific features of the work of Barcelona's architectural masters within the context of the pan-European Art Nouveau language, capturing also the general diversity of formal expressions of the style in the regional context.

Introduction

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, is an Art Nouveau pearl on the north-western coast of the Mediterranean. The rapid growth of the city began after 1859, when the fortress ramparts around the old town were demolished and the vast surrounding area began to be built up according to a project developed by Ildefons Cerdà i Suner. His voluminous two-volume book "General Theory of Urbanisation" [1], published in 1867, first introduced into scientific circulation the term "urbanisation", which is now quite common and used in various forms of expression in almost all languages. The centre of Barcelona, which he designed – Eixample, meaning "extension" – is a model of urban planning discipline. It has a regular street network with square blocks with bevelled corners. Many of the buildings here were built at the beginning of the 20th century, when Art Nouveau architecture was dominant.

The beginning of the 20th century was a time of general economic, scientific and artistic prosperity. The national outskirts of several empires, for example, Finland and the Baltic states in Russia, several peripheral regions of Austria-Hungary and also Catalonia, which was under

the rule of the Spanish Bourbons for almost 200 years, were usually more economically developed than their metropolises. This provided a fertile environment for innovative processes in architecture, because in it, it is possible to encode ideas in a generalised and mediated way that could not be expressed in other, more directly perceptible forms of art. This was quite relevant during periods of national self-confidence surges. In Catalonia, too, the national awakening, or *La Renaixença*, reached its apogee at the beginning of the 20th century. It was naturally reflected in all the visual arts. Therefore, Catalonia also became one of the centres of Art Nouveau, but Art Nouveau, which is called Modernism (*Modernisme*) in this country, has quite pronounced features of ancient local cultural traditions. Art Nouveau architecture defines the character of the cityscape in Barcelona only in some places, but some statistics list almost 3000 buildings [2] in the city and its suburbs that exhibit Art Nouveau features to some extent. This number significantly exceeds similar indicators in any other European Art Nouveau centre.

There are countless publications devoted to Barcelona's Art Nouveau architecture, both on bookstore shelves and online. However, as is usual in such publications, they

often contain standard assessments that travel from one to the next and need to be re-evaluated over time. However, Barcelona today also knows how to take care of documenting, preserving and promoting this unique architectural heritage. It is in Barcelona that the Municipal Institute for Urban Landscape and Quality of Life has been regularly publishing the benchmark Art Nouveau magazine “Coup de Fouet” since 2003.

Art Nouveau is so rich and diverse in its formal language that new, previously unnoticed details are always being discovered, and new evaluations are constantly emerging. Art Nouveau is so rich and diverse in its formal language that new, previously unnoticed details are always being discovered, and new assessments are constantly emerging. A fresh “view from the outside” is often useful, and the author hopes that his vision will also make a certain contribution to the improvement of the contemporary understanding of Art Nouveau. This is an attempt to discover the commonalities and differences in the works of Barcelona’s Art Nouveau architects, also analysing works that have been mentioned less often, and to reveal specific features of the style in the regional context.

I. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet

A whole series of talented architects worked productively in Barcelona during the Art Nouveau era, but the term “Barcelona Art Nouveau” is most often associated with the name of the world-famous Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (1852–1926). Numerous publications have been devoted to his extraordinary work and personality, and new ones appear periodically [3]–[10]. Gaudí’s unconventional worldview was almost imaginary; each of his buildings was an unprecedented novelty in architecture, but his work hardly fits into the traditional categories of Art Nouveau image.

The architect’s creative activity flourished already in the 1880s – a time of eclecticism, when the ideas of Art Nouveau in architecture had not yet matured to even the level of a seed. The church of the Holy Family (La Sagrada Família), begun in 1883, was such a huge and ambitious project that only a small part of it was built during the master’s lifetime. In the architecture of this neo-Gothic building, Gaudí transformed Gothic forms into an artwork resembling sculptural stalactites, in which stylised plants, animals and groups of sacred or mythological figures intertwine in fantastic compositions. Construction work resumed in 1952 and continues to this day. In the mid-2020s, the final outline of the church was already visible (Fig. 1).

At the same time as the Sagrada Família, the construction of the residential building Casa Vicens, designed by Gaudí, began in one of the ancient districts of Barcelona, Gràcia, at Corsa Carolines, 24. The building resembles a sculpture of geometric shapes made of natural stones, bricks, openwork

metal grilles and ceramic tiles of various shades (Figs. 2 and 3). Although the architectural finish of the building’s facade surfaces is eclectically saturated with details rooted in traditional Mudejar art, the massing is asymmetrically dynamic, close to the aesthetics of Art Nouveau. Apparently, this building directly influenced Gaudí’s contemporaries and followers to focus on the search for a national identity, based on local artistic traditions. The style of this building can be called proto-Art Nouveau. The building was renovated from 2015 to 2017, and then it was opened to the public as a museum.

Fig. 1. La Sagrada Família. 1883–. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet. 2023 photograph.



Fig. 2. Casa Vicens, Corsa Carolines, 24. Carrer de les Carolines, 18–24. 1883–1885. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.



Fig. 3. Casa Vicens. Living room on the ground floor.





Fig. 4. Palacio Güell, Carrer Nou de la Rambla, 5. 1886–1890. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.

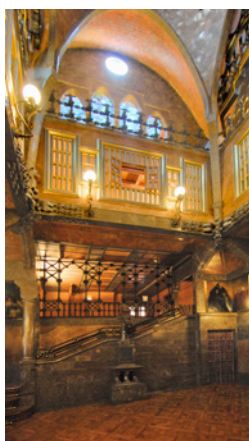


Fig. 5. Palacio Güell, central hall.



Fig. 6. Pavellons Güell, Avinguda de Pedralbes, 15. 1884–1887. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.

A wide range of architectural innovations were implemented in the Palacio Güell, located in the very centre of Barcelona's old town, Carrer Nou de la Rambla, 5. Gaudí built this building between 1886 and 1890 for Eusebi Güell, a businessman, textile factory owner, architect's supporter and the client of many of his projects. With this representative residence building (Fig. 4), Gaudí has proven himself as a master of special moods and spatial qualities. On the third floor of the dynamically articulated street facade, the outer wall is projected along the entire length of the facade and rests on consoles, but the main plane of the facade is replaced in this place in the interior with a peculiar, two-layered column arcade. This solution fully corresponds to the curtain wall common today, and it seems that it was used here for the first time in history. The central part of the building rises through several floors, forming a modern atrium-type large space (Fig. 5). Most of the interior is thus visually merged in both horizontal and vertical directions. The chimney forest on the roof of the building can be more aptly described as a sculpture garden.

At the same time as the Güell Palace was being built, Gaudí also began construction of the Güell estate or farm (Finca Güell), located at what is now Avinguda de Pedralbes, 15. Of this, only the gatekeeper's house and the stables at the entrance gate were built (Fig. 6). The architecture of these small buildings is rooted in Arabic art motifs, and the gate is decorated with a stylised dragon forged in iron. The artistic language of the neo-Gothic facades and interiors of the Colegio Teresiano building, built in 1889–1894 in the north-western suburb of Barcelona, Sarrià-Sant Gervasi, Carrer de Ganduxer, 85 (Fig. 7), interprets the vocabulary of medieval architecture through the prism of the architect's unique personal vision. At the end of the 19th century, the most significant work of Gaudí was the residential building Casa Calvet (1898–1899), located in the very centre of Barcelona, Carrer de Casp, 48 (Fig. 8). It is

also to some extent eclectic, in this case, a neo-baroque building, but it marks a perceptible transition from the interpretation of historical models to the free artistic shaping corresponding to the Art Nouveau method.



Fig. 7. Colegio Teresiano, Carrer de Ganduxer, 85. 1889–1894. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.



Fig. 8. Casa Calvet, Carrer de Casp, 48. 1898–1900. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.



Fig. 9. Casa Milà, Passeig de Gràcia, 92. 1905–1910. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.

Gaudí's freely creative imagination was particularly powerful during the heyday of Art Nouveau at the beginning of the 20th century. One of the peaks of his creative work is the residential building Casa Milà – one of the symbols of Barcelona's modernism and icons of Art Nouveau throughout Europe (Fig. 9). It is also known by the nickname *La Pedrera*, which in Catalan means “the quarry”. The building's undulating, natural stone-clad facades really resemble a weathered rock surface or the wall of a stone quarry. The only ornamental decorations are rounded tension line patterns and squares in the door and gate leaves, and sculptural tangles of plant motifs forged in metal on the balcony railings. They contrast elegantly with the stone wall of the facade. Everything is unusual here – the free fenestration, which corresponds to the equally free, soft-line plan of the building executed in steel skeleton structure, the parabolic arches of various heights in the attic floor covering and, finally, the terraced roof, above which rises a whole forest of chimneys of various sculptural shapes. They resemble both the knights' figures and the decorations used in the Catalans' beloved carnivals. These chimneys, along with the artistic image of the entire building, are direct precursors of the expressionism and surrealism of the 1920s.

Nearby, at Passeig de Gràcia, 43, is another Gaudí masterpiece – the residential building Casa Batlló (1904–1905). It is one of the master's most complete and detailed works (Fig. 10). The sculptural facade is crowned by a sculptural roof of colourful ceramic tiles, resembling the scaly back of a dragon. The balconies on the upper floors, clad in soft-toned tiles, look like masks with large eyes. The bone-shaped pillars in the portico of the first floor and the loggia of the second floor symbolise the beast's victims,



Fig. 10. Casa Batlló, Passeig de Gràcia, 43. 1904–1905. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.



Fig. 11. Casa Batlló. Salon in the second-floor apartment.

while the dragon's back is pierced by a spear-handle-like tower with a cross on the top. The allegory is clear: Saint George (Catalan *Sant Jordi*), who fought the dragon, is the patron saint of Barcelona. Despite the abundance of colours and shapes, the building leaves a solid and bright impression. The interior decoration is particularly well-groomed. Glass, metal and ceramics are widely used there, but a real demonstration of the sculptural possibilities of carpentry is the windows and numerous doors, each with its own distinct sash frames in wavy, soft, streamlined shapes (Fig. 11).



Fig. 12. Entrance to the Parc Güell. 1900–1914. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.



Fig. 13. Colonia Güell. Cripta Gaudí. 1898 (project); 1908–1914 (construction). Antoni Gaudí i Cornet.



Fig. 14. Chairs of Caca Calvet. 1903. Antoni Gaudí i Cornet. Exhibits at the Barcelona Art Nouveau Museum.

Among other masterpieces of Gaudí, the Parc Güell stands out with its radiant joy of colours and fantastic play of forms rooted in the organic world of nature. It is located on a hillside northwest of the city centre and was designed as infrastructure for a garden city, where it was planned to build about 60 single-family residential houses. However, the plan turned out to be unsuccessful. Among the implemented elements, the most interesting is the monumental entrance part (Fig. 12), behind which there is a terrace above an open multi-column (hypostyle) hall. The hall was intended as a market, and the terrace – as a public square. It offers a magnificent view of the city and the sea. The terrace is bordered by an unusual, thinly configured sinusoidal parapet – a bench, the back of which is decorated with a mosaic of coloured ceramic tile fragments – *trencadis*, which is a traditional local decoration technique. This mosaic, like the decorative elements in Gaudí's *La Pedrera* and *Casa Batlló*, was created by the master's collaborator, architect Josep Maria Jujol i Gibert. The only residential building in the park was built in 1905 according to the design of another Gaudí student, architect Francesc Berenguer i Mestres, and it served Gaudí's own needs.

Approximately 20 km west of Barcelona, in Santa Coloma de Cervelló, the workers' district or colony of the Güell textile factory is situated. It was planned to build a huge church there according to Gaudí's design. Only the crypt (1898–1914) has been built, but even that is a whole separate work of art. The interior of the crypt (Fig. 13) fascinates with its strongly ribbed brick saddle vaults, which are supported by roughly hewn stone columns. They are not vertical, but the slopes are not an artistic whim – they correspond to the structural loads to be taken up. Like all the great architects of his time, Gaudí was also a furniture designer and a master

of applied arts. The rooms of several of his buildings were furnished with furniture of his own design (Fig. 14).

II. Works by Collaborators of Gaudí, Josep Maria Jujol i Gibert and Francesc Berenguer i Mestres

Gaudí's collaborator, architect Jujol i Gibert created architectural decoration details not only for Gaudí's buildings but also for other architects. For example, the facade of the six-story apartment house on the corner of Carrer de València and Carrer de Bailèn, built in 1902 according to the design of the architect Antoni Maria Gallissà i Soqué, is decorated with red-toned sgraffito ornaments (Fig. 15), the author of which was Jujol i Gibert. The buildings created according to his own designs clearly reflect Gaudí's

Fig. 15. Casa Llopis, Carrer de València, 339 / Carrer de Bailèn 113. 1902. Antoni Maria Gallissà i Soqué. Ornamental finish of facades – José María Jujol i Gibert.





Fig. 16. Sant Joan Despi. Casa Negra, Plaça de Catalunya, 1. 1915–1926. José María Jujol i Gibert.



Fig. 17. Casa Planells, Avinguda Diagonal, 332. 1924. José María Jujol i Gibert.



Fig. 18. Casa Francesc Cama i Ecurra, Carrer Gran de Gràcia, 15. 1902–1904. Francesc Berenguer i Mestres.

formal language, or at least its feeling. One of his best-known works is the Casa Negra, which was converted from an older farm building into a residential house in 1915–1926 (Fig. 16). It is located in Barcelona's immediate neighbour, Sant Joan Despi, Plaça de Catalunya, 1. The sculptural language of the architecture, which speaks to everyone from afar, reaches its peak indoors – especially in the literal and figurative sense of the word, as seen in the colourful ceiling of the staircase, as well as in the small family chapel. The apartment building Casa Planells in Barcelona, Avinguda Diagonal, 332 (Fig. 20), built already during the Functionalist or Modern Movement period, combines soft-line sculpturalism with the ascetic expression of Functionalism.

More of a seeker of his own path in his independent works was Berenguer i Mestres. Several of his 20th-century buildings are located on Carrer Gran de Gràcia. This street is a continuation of Barcelona's main artery, Passeig de Gràcia, in a northern direction. The multi-storey apartment house Casa Francesc Cama i Ecurra, Carrer Gran de Gràcia, 15 (1902–1904) is easily recognisable in the streetscape with two finely articulated, fully glazed bay windows (Fig. 18). Such architectural elements of facades became one of the hallmarks of Barcelona architecture of the Art Nouveau period. The facades of the tenement house at Carrer Gran de Gràcia, 77 (1905), owned by the same landlord, Francesc Cama i Ecurra, are also equipped with strongly articulated bay windows and balconies. This building is located on the corner of the block and stands out with an expressive silhouette (Fig. 19), the outline of which is a metaphor for both medieval battlements and local Mudéjar art. It is also one of the characteristic details of the formal language of Barcelona Art Nouveau.

In the constellation of Barcelona modernists, along with Gaudí, as the brightest stars are usually mentioned architects Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Lluís Domènech i Montaner, and Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia. Many studies have been devoted to

their work [11]–[17]. Each of them had a distinctly different creative style. That is why the unique quarter of Passeig de Gràcia, which, in addition to Gaudí's Casa Batlló, also contains buildings designed by all these masters, is called the “Island of Disaccord” (Illa de la Discòrdia) (Fig. 20).

Fig. 19. Casa Francesc Cama i Ecurra, Carrer Gran de Gràcia, 77. 1905. Francesc Berenguer i Mestres.



Fig. 20. Passeig de Gràcia between Carrer del Consell de Cent un Carrer d'Aragó (“Island of Disaccord”). Early 20th-century postcard [18].





Fig. 21. Casa Amatler,
Passeig de Gràcia, 41. 1898–1900.
Josep Puig i Cadafalch.



Fig. 22. Casa de les Punxes, Avinguda
de la Diagonal, 416–420. 1903–1905.
Josep Puig i Cadafalch.



Fig. 23. Palau del Baró de Quadras,
Avinguda de la Diagonal, 373. 1904.
Josep Puig i Cadafalch.

III. Josep Puig i Cadafalch

Right next to Casa Batlló, Passeig de Gràcia, 41, rises Casa Amatller, built by Puig i Cadafalch in 1898–1900 (Fig. 21). Here, as in his other works, the architect used motifs of European medieval architecture, arranging and grouping them in dynamic compositions according to the character and design of the interior. Casa Amatller stands out with a noticeable corbie-stepped gable – a free composition on a late Gothic theme, but the interior spaces are arranged in an integrated, continuous system, which today has made it possible to conveniently set up a museum accessible to the general public.

One of the most characteristic and expressive buildings by Puig i Cadafalch is the large, medieval castle-like residential building that occupies an entire block between Avenida de la Diagonal, Carrer Bruc and Carrer Rosselló (1903–1905). Due to its many pointed pediments, conical spire-topped towers and distinctly vertical facade shaping, it is known as the Casa de les Punxes, which means “house of the big nails” (Fig. 22). It has become one of the symbols of Barcelona’s Art Nouveau. Nearby, on the opposite side of Avenida de la Diagonal, at Avinguda de la Diagonal, 373, there is another work by this architect – the relatively small residential building Palau del Baró de Quadras (1904). Each floor has a different fenestration (Fig. 23), while on the third floor, there is a bay window with a balcony above it, extending along the entire length of the facade. The bay window facade and balcony parapet are a filigree masterpiece of neo-Gothic sculpture, carved in stone by Alfons Juyol i Bach and Eusebi Arnau i Mascort. These sculptors also created the impressive reliefs on the facades of the Casa de les Punxes.

IV. Lluís Domènech i Montaner

The corner of the “Island of Disaccord” quarter at the intersection with Carrer del Consell de Cent is highlighted by the Casa Lleó Morera (Fig. 24) designed by Domènec i Montaner in 1905. This residential building is a particularly expressive example of a modern interpretation of local building traditions. The harmoniously balanced



Fig. 24. Casa
Lleó Morera,
Passeig de
Gràcia, 35. 1905.
Lluís Domènech
i Montaner.



Fig. 25. Reus. Casa Navàs, Plaça Mercadal, 7. 1901–1907. Lluís Domènech i Montaner. 2000 photograph.



Fig. 26. Casa Navàs. Staircase.

composition of the facades includes bay windows, balconies and loggias of various shapes, while a turret rises above the corner. Round windows stand out among the various apertures, which, together with the balconies attached to them, resemble one of the common icons of Art Nouveau – the keyhole shape. The architecture of the facades also organically includes filigree decorative reliefs, created by sculptor Eusebi Arnau i Maskort. Among plant twists and allegorical images, technical discoveries of the period – electric light bulbs, telephone handsets, etc. – are depicted.

The general composition of the artistic image of Casa Lleó Morera was conceived by Domènec i Montaner as early as 1901, when, according to his design, the construction of a slightly smaller residential building, Casa Navàs, began in the main square of Reus, at Plaça Mercadal, 7. Reus, located about 100 km southwest of Barcelona, is the hometown of Gaudí, but there is not a single building designed by him. However, as many as five buildings were created there by Domènec i Montaner. Casa Navàs (Fig. 25) is one of the emblems of Catalan modernism (Art Nouveau). It was “a liberation which was politically motivated and aided by tradition (and the Gothic style); one could call it a liberating reinterpretation of historicism and eclecticism. It was thereby also incomparably more compromising towards the past than was Jugendstil” [19]. Casa Navàs suffered a bomb explosion that hit a neighbouring house during the Spanish Civil War, and stood for more than 80 years without the elegant corner turret and neo-Gothic corbie-stepped gable that crowned the facade facing the square.

In 2018, the building was permanently open to public visits, the gable was reconstructed in 2020, and the corner turret is planned to be restored in 2025. All interior spaces have remained intact and present a unique ensemble of authentic Art Nouveau finish, furniture, and household items – a true Art Nouveau Gesamtkunstwerk (Fig. 26). The luxurious and rich decoration, which is interwoven with motifs of both European medieval architecture and Spanish Arab art, reflects the architect's understanding of what the national architecture of Catalonia should look like. On this topic, he had already published an article entitled “In Search of National Architecture” in the magazine “La Renaixença” in 1878 [20]. The architectural composition and artistic finish of both Casa Navàs and Casa Lleó Morera are also similar to that of the “Gran Hotel” building in Palma de Mallorca, Plaça de Weyler, 33, designed by Domènec i Montaner in 1903.

Domènec i Montaner was a very versatile personality – not only an architect, but also a public figure, politician, publisher and illustrator of books and periodicals, interior designer and educator, having been for 45 years a professor at the Barcelona School of Architecture, opened in 1875. His name, although for a long time it seemed to remain in the shadow of Gaudí, has left an indelible mark on the general history of culture on a much wider scale than just Barcelona. Compared to Gaudí, his architecture is less sculptural, but more tectonic and rooted in the traditional expression of local architecture. His buildings are decoratively saturated and expressively articulated, and he introduced various structural innovations.



Fig. 27. Editorial Montaner i Simón, Carrer Aragó, 255. 1879–1886. Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

The very first of Domènec i Montaner's architectural works was the Editorial Montaner i Simón building at Carrer Aragó, 255 (Fig. 27), built between 1879 and 1886. The extensive glazing on the facade was an unusual innovation in the traditional eclectic architecture. One of the earliest examples of the characteristic glazed bay windows in Barcelona is his apartment building Casa Thomas (1895–1898), located at Carrer Mallorca 291–293 (Fig. 28). In 1912, the building was extended by adding the upper floors to a design by Domènec i Montaner's son-in-law, the architect Francesc Guàrdia i Vial.

The narrow facade of the Lamadrid apartment building at Carrer de Girona, 113 (1902) is a rich installation of baroque curvilinear shapes, in which many architectural details have been transformed into sculptures of plants, while the balcony railings – into twisted in Art Nouveau mood metal strips. One of the most expressive examples of mature Art Nouveau in Domènec i Montaner's work is the apartment building (now a hotel) Casa Fuster at Paseig de Gràcia, 132 (1908–1911). The facades of the building, clad in white marble (Fig. 29), are distinguished by a dynamic massing, relatively complex fenestration and elegant finish, while the capitals of the columns, lintels of the apertures, pediments, corner tower and other architectural elements and details reveal a flirtation with the language of historical styles, especially Gothic.

Two works by Domènec i Montaner – the Hospital de Sant Pau (1901–1911) and the Palau de la Música Catalana (1905–1908) – were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997. Construction of the Hospital continued until 1930 under the direction of the architect's son, Pere Domènec i Roura.

The Hospital of Saint Paul is an ensemble of buildings, occupying a 13.5 ha plot of land at the northeast end of the diagonally oriented Avinguda de Gaudí. The administration building, crowned with a Gothic-style tower (Fig. 30), is a peculiar “gate” to the hospital and at the same time a monumental visual conclusion of the avenue. Behind it, hospital pavilions connected by underground tunnels

Fig. 28. Casa Thomas, Carrer de Mallorca, 291–293. 1895–1898. Lluís Domènech i Montaner.



Fig. 29. Casa Fuster, Paseig de Gràcia, 132. 1908–1911. Lluís Domènec i Montaner.



Fig. 30. Hospital de Sant Pau, Carrer de Sant Antoni Maria Claret, 167–171. 1901–1911. Lluís Domènec i Montaner. Administration building.





Fig. 31. Hospital de Sant Pau.
View from the administration building.



Fig. 32. Hospital de Sant Pau. Staircase in the
administration building

several kilometres long line both sides of the diagonal axis of the hospital ensemble (Fig. 31). It also includes an operating block, a mighty church and other buildings, which both from the outside and inside (Fig. 32), dazzle with the diversity of massing, the variety of decorative elements organically incorporated into the architecture, and the multicolour of the ceramic tile coatings.

The pinnacle of Domènec i Montaner's work is the Palau de la Música de Catalunya, a concert hall and home of the Orfeó Català choir. The breath-taking building (Fig. 33), nestled in the narrow streets of Barcelona's old town, is a veritable catalogue of Art Nouveau decorative techniques and forms, but despite the fabulous richness

and variety of decorations, its architecture is structurally logical and coherent. Both the lacy facades and the effectively merged interior spaces (Fig. 34) are saturated with colourful ceramic mosaics, stained glass windows, reliefs and sculptures. Although overly decorated, the building is light and transparent, creating an uplifting and joyful atmosphere. It is rightly believed that, after the masterpieces of Italian and German Baroque, the hall of the Catalan Palace of Music is the most unusual and luxurious space in the history of architecture. The huge stained glass window in the form of an inverted dome hanging from the ceiling of the hall is especially impressive.



Fig. 33. Palau de la
Música Catalana,
Carrer de Sant Pere
Més Alt, 11.
1905–1908.
Lluís Domènec i
Montaner.



Fig.34. Palau de la Música Catalana. Concert hall.



Fig. 35. Casa Jaume Forn, Carrer de València, 285. 1909. Jeroni Ferran Granell i Manresa.



Fig. 36. Casa Pia Batlló, Rambla de Catalunya, 17. 1891–1896. Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas.

V. The Urban Image of Barcelona in the Context of Art Nouveau Innovations: the Contribution of Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas and His Colleagues

Although Barcelona probably has more Art Nouveau buildings than any other city proud of this style of architecture, the image of buildings directly rooted in the arsenal of popular Art Nouveau decorative language is almost nowhere dominant in Barcelona. The features most characteristic of Barcelona cityscape are the bevelled corners of blocks and the fully glazed bay windows, which are usually attached by balconies and either emphasise the central axis of the facade at the level of the first or second floor or rise to almost the height of the entire building on the flanks of the facade. In block corner buildings, which have as many as three facades due to the long bevels of corners, such bay windows often emphasise the corners of the building's volume (Figs. 15 and 35). It seems that one of the first to use such bay windows was the renowned architect Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas, when he designed the Pia Batlló building. It is located at Rambla de Catalunya, 17, on the corner of Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes and was

Fig. 37. Casa Cabot. Carrer de Roger de Llúria, 12-14. 1901–1904. Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas.



built between 1891 and 1896 (Fig. 36). This was a time when eclecticism still completely dominated architecture, and the architectural and artistic finish of this building is also a synthesis of Gothic, Renaissance and Classicist language.

Vilaseca i Casanovas attached two completely glazed bay windows to the building at Carrer de Roger de Llúria, 12-14, built in 1901–1904, already during the heyday of Art Nouveau (Fig. 37). The facade of the building is crowned by the dentil parapet, quite characteristic of Catalan Art Nouveau, which recalls both the battlements of medieval fortifications and something from the world of Arabic art. In the complex rhythm of the composition, a multi-layered pediment rises above the axis of each window, in which relief Gothic forms intertwine with Art Nouveau ornaments executed in the sgraffito technique. The culmination of Vilaseca i Casanovas' architectural evolution is the apartment house with shops at Rambla de Catalunya, 54, built in 1903 (Fig. 38). The most of the building's facade is a mighty, continuously glazed bay window, which is in



Fig. 38. Casa Dolors Calm, Rambla de Catalunya, 54. 1903. Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas.

fact a curtain wall and visually remotely resembles the contemporary glazed facades of the Modern Movement. The distribution and shape of the windows in the glazed wall on each floor is different, but the dynamic rhythm in the horizontal direction responds to the interior layout. Structural details of the glazing, made of wood, reflect the decorative techniques of Art Nouveau in a wide range, also incorporating certain interpretations of Gothic and Arabic forms into an Art Nouveau mood. Transparent glazing is interspersed with ornamental stained glass. The geometrically strict play of Art Nouveau flower motifs and sinuous lines appeals to any passer-by at the main entrance.

Among the glazed facades, a special example of Barcelona Art Nouveau is the apartment building Casa Comalat (1909–1911, architect Salvador Valeri i Pupurull). The building is located in a small triangular block between Avinguda Diagonal, Carrer de Córsega and Carrer de Pau Claris, and has two facades facing different streets. The facade at Carrer de Córsega, 316 (Fig. 39) attracts the most attention. It is covered almost entirely by picturesque shaped glazed galleries, which can be accessed from the living rooms, giving the building an appearance that directly resembles the image of the Modern Movement buildings of the second half of the 20th century. However, unlike the rigid geometricity of the Modern Movement, this facade has a wavy surface, all of the unglazed areas of which are densely covered with ornamental mosaics. The facade of lower floors, which house commercial premises, is a composition of parabolic arches of various sizes and fantastic ornaments. It is a peculiar variation on the motifs of Gaudí's Casa Milà, only executed in other materials and different colouristic. To some extent, it is paradoxical that this is the “rear” facade of the building. The main entrance facade faces Avinguda Diagonal (Fig. 40) and often remains unnoticed behind the dense foliage of nearby trees. The architectural composition of this facade is more in line with the canon of Barcelona Art Nouveau: the middle part above the filigree main entrance is emphasised by a widely glazed stepped bay window, which has three windows on the first floor and one on the second, while the facade is crowned by a lushly articulated pediment with various acroteria, both geometric in shape and sculptural. Behind this pediment rises a small tower modelled in the shape of a harlequin hat and covered with dark green ceramic tiles – apparently a symbol of the Catalans' joy of life and their ability to celebrate various carnivals on a grand scale. The facade is coated in natural stone, and all the architectural details are actually ornamental stone sculptures (Fig. 41). The finishing material is grey throughout, but the facade literally shines with the colours of carnival brilliance.

A visible proof of Art Nouveau as the beginning of the Modern Movement or functionalism in the Art Nouveau architectural heritage of Barcelona is the Damian's Department Store, located almost in the heart of the city, at Carrer de Pelai, 54, and built in 1913–1915. The

Fig. 39. Casa Comalat.
1909–1911.
Salvador Valeri i
Pupurull.
Facade at Carrer de
Córsega, 316.



Fig. 40. Casa Comalat.
Drawing of the elevation at
Avinguda Diagonal, 442 [21].

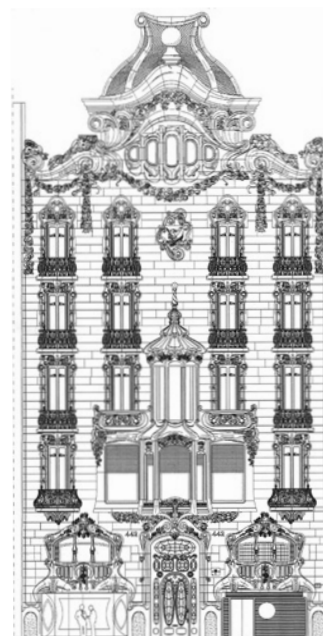


Fig. 41. Casa Comalat. Fragment of the façade at
Avinguda Diagonal, 442.



building now houses the C&A supermarket. Construction work began according to the project of master builder Agustí Mas i Sauris, but it was later modified by architects Eduard Ferrés i Puig and Lluís Homs i Moncusi. The building is one of the first in Barcelona with a cast-in-situ reinforced concrete skeleton structure. This has allowed the facade to be designed freely, with smoothly curved continuous glazing arranged in several sections (Fig. 42). In this modern building, the idea of a synthesis of arts architecture has also been implemented: stringcourses are decorated with sgraffito ornaments, but the fourth floor is designed as an attic decorated with two allegorical sculptures. On the left, a man symbolises work, and on the right, a woman – education. A cylindrical tower crowned by a globe illuminated at night rises above the building. The rear facade of the building on Carrer dels Tallers is simpler and geometrically more rigid, but its tectonics with large glazing also clearly reflect the spatial structure of the building. A large atrium-type space covered with a glass roof dominates the interior (Fig. 43). Over time, the building has suffered several fires, but has always been restored and has well preserved its authentic appearance.

VI. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia

One of the most productive, if not the most productive, architects of Barcelona in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was Sagnier i Villavecchia. Inventory of his works includes more than 400 objects, and 59 of them are listed as cultural monuments of Barcelona [17, 15]. The architect's creative oeuvre was unusually broad; he freely mastered the

language of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque. In 1906, when Art Nouveau was already in full swing, Sanjè i Vilavecchia transformed the facade of the 19th-century tenement house Casa Mulleras, located at Passeig de Gràcia, 37, in the famous “Island of Disaccord” quarter between Domènec i Montaner's Casa Lleo Morera and Puch i Cadafalc's Casa Amatller. This building, unlike its neighbours, is quite eclectic: the Barcelonian bay window on the first floor is dressed in Renaissance clothes, while the balcony railings are decorated with classical festoons. Obviously, the architect respected the architecture of the existing building.

Eclectic buildings by Sagnier i Villavecchia also show distinctly innovative solutions relatively early on. For example, in the architectural finish of the facade of the apartment building at Rambla de Catalunya, 104, owned by the architect himself, which was built according to his design in 1892–1894, “he took Gothic ornamental elements and combined them in an original way” [22]. However, the main feature of the facade architecture of this building is not ornamentation, but the massing: in the middle of the fourth and fifth floors, a completely glazed bay window stands out, behind which the architect's office was located.

Most of Art Nouveau buildings designed by Sanjè i Vilavecchia have restrained, simple, balanced facades that usually feature expressive accents – a series of gables or parapets with a complicated silhouette line and bay windows or apertures with the surrounds which are shaped in characteristic curved and tense Art Nouveau lines and are decorated with reliefs of plant motifs. Such, for example, is the apartment house at Carrer de la Diputació, 235, built in 1901–1904 (Fig. 44). Nearby, at the intersection of Carrer de Balmes and Carrer del Consell de Cent, the next

Fig. 42. Department Store Carrer de Pelai, 54. 1913–1915. Eduard Ferrés i Puig and Lluís Homs i Moncusi.



Fig. 43. Department Store Carrer de Pelai, 54. Interior.



Fig. 44. Casa Josep Bertrand, Carrer de la Diputació, 235. 1901–1904. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia.



corner of the same block is emphasized by the apartment house Casa Joan Josep Bertrand (Fig. 45), built in 1902–1904. The lower floors of it now house the Barcelona Art Nouveau Museum. Both buildings have a somewhat similar silhouette and the facades with tonal contrasts. Fantastic leaf and flower reliefs wind around the entrance portals and under the balconies.

Another corner house located at the intersection of Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes and Carrer de Roger de Llúria was built between 1901 and 1907, repeatedly expanding the initially small residential building while preserving the stylistics of its architectural finish. Therefore, the relatively restrained and also contemporary architecture of the building's facades reveals a touch of eclecticism. Particularly exposed in the urban environment is the corner house Casa Rupert Garriga Miranda, located at the intersection of several streets, including Passeig de Gràcia and Diagonal (1909–1912). Its address is Carrer de Corsega, 321. The facade facing the wide intersection square (Plaça Cinc d'Oros) is designed in a restrained neo-Baroque manner, while the tripartite, three-quarter-circle window on the first floor is a hallmark of Art Nouveau formal language, modelled after the pattern of the entrance to Hector Guimard's famous residential building, Castel Beranger, in Paris.

One of the most magnificent Art Nouveau buildings by Sagnier i Villavecchia – Casa Ferran Cortés (1902–1904) – is located almost opposite Vilaseca i Casanovas' Casa Calm, at Rambla de Catalunya, 47. Widely glazed bay window rises to a height of four floors on the middle axis of the building's facade (Fig. 46). The line of both lintels and sills of the apertures of the bay window undulates in Art Nouveau mood. Various floral motifs organically grow from the surface of the facade clad in natural stone. Similar soft-line contours of apertures and decorative elements in Rococo manner, which are nevertheless firmly oriented towards the Art Nouveau formal expression, are found in a number of other buildings: "a repertoire of forms associated with Rococo was widely used by Sagnier i Villavecchia in his architecture from around 1900 to 1910, and naturalistic plant ornament played a major role in it" [23]. The most characteristic such buildings constructed at this time, according to the designs by the architect, are at Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 654 (1904), Passeig de Gràcia, 74 (1904–1907) (Fig. 47), Carrer de Mallorca, 308 (1916), etc. The composition of all these facades displays the typical bay window in the middle of the first floor.

Starting in 1907, a new, wide street, Via Laietana, was "broken" through the dense medieval built-up environment of the old town of Barcelona. Six buildings on this street were designed by Sagnier i Villavecchia. One of the first among them is the Banco Hispano Colonial, at Via Laietana, 3, built in 1911–1913 (Fig. 48). The architectural finish of the building's facades displays elements from Gothic,



Fig. 45. Casa Joan Josep Bertrand, Carrer de Balmes, 44-50/ Carrer del Consell de Cent, 276. 1902–1904. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia



Fig. 46. Casa Fargas, Rambla de Catalunya, 47. 1902–1904. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia. Villavecchia



Fig. 47. Casa Coma Cross, Passeig de Gràcia, 74. 1904–1907. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia. Fragment of the facade.



Fig. 48. Banco Hispano Colonial, Via Laietana, 3. 1911–1913. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia. El Poder de la Palabra photograph [25].

Baroque and Classicist vocabulary, but the large pilasters that rhythmically divide the facade, as well as the smaller pilasters between the windows of the upper floor, are decorated with the widespread throughout Europe ornamental icon of Art Nouveau – three vertical lines, of which the middle one is longer. On the large pilasters, these lines are Ionic bands, and on the small ones, smooth relief bands with circles at the lower ends. This ornamental decoration is not widespread in Barcelona; however, ornaments are not the essence of Art Nouveau. This building “reveals the possibilities of modern construction systems, which freed the walls from the need to support loads, allowing the facades to be pierced by large windows” [24]. The wide fenestration of facades is one of the main features of the style.

One of the most impressive ensembles of buildings by Sagnier i Villavecchia – the office buildings of the Pension Fund (Caixa de Pensions) and the “House of Forecasts” (Casal de la Previsió) – was built a little later at the opposite, north-western end of Via Laietana (Fig. 49). Caixa de Pensions at Via Laietana, 56-58, was built in 1914–1917. This was already the time of late Art Nouveau, or rather the decline of the style, and the architecture of this building can also be described as neo-Gothic, implemented in unusual massing. The Art Nouveau shaping method is reflected only in the unusually dynamic and diverse fenestration of the facades. One facade is still decorated with a commemorative plaque with information about the Barcelona City Council Prize in Architecture awarded to this building. The adjacent office building, Casal de la Previsió, whose address is Jonqueres, 2, was built even later, in 1920, and is perhaps even more neo-Gothic, but at the same time very reminiscent of the upright Art Nouveau style, especially popular in Germany and in Northern Europe as well.

VII. Barcelona Art Nouveau Brands in the Cityscape

One of the hallmarks of Barcelona Art Nouveau – the large bay windows in the middle of the facade, shaped in soft lines – has been interpreted in various ways in their works by many architects or master builders – builders who were granted the official title of “master of works” (Mestre d’Obres). This also gave them the right to work out building projects and supervise construction. Until the middle of the first decade of the 20th century, these characteristic bay windows were mostly relatively small and only on the first floor (Figs. 50–52). As with most Art Nouveau buildings in Barcelona, the facades of all these buildings also interpret architectural or decorative elements rooted in the formal vocabulary of various historical styles in one way or another. Most often, references are made to Gothic, less often to Renaissance or Baroque, but often to everything together, complementing the composition



Fig. 49. Caixa de Pensions, Via Laietana, 56-58, (1914–1917), left, and office building Casal de la Previsió, Jonqueres, 2 (1920, in the middle. Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia.



Fig. 50. Casa Jaume Sahís, Carrer del Bruc, 127. 1900–1901. Master builder Josep Pérez i Terraza.



Fig. 51. Casa Antonio Casamitjana, Carrer Gran de Gràcia, 23. 1902. Francesc Ferriol i Carreras.



Fig. 52. Casa Juncosa, Rambla de Catalunya, 78. 1907–1909. Salvador Viñals i Sabaté.



Fig. 53. Casa Berenguer Clapes, Carrer de la Diputació, 246. 1907–1909.
Bonaventura Bassegoda i Amigó.



Fig. 54. Casa Elena Castellano, Carrer de Santa Anna, 21. 1907.
Jaume Torres i Grau.



Fig. 55. Apartment house at la Rambla, 84. 1860, rebuilt in 1915.
Architect unknown.

with fashionable Art Nouveau ornaments, executed in the sgraffito technique, shaped as reliefs or used in the metalwork of balcony railings.

Starting from the middle of the first decade of the 20th century, the characteristic wide-glazed bay windows often began to “grow”, occupying the second floor in the same dimension as the first (Fig. 53) or forming a stepped composition (Fig. 54). While Art Nouveau became more restrained in general at this time, these bay windows usually still were not only pure architectural elements but also decorative accents. In their ornamental pattern, Art Nouveau organically intertwines with Baroque.

The same hallmark of Barcelona Art Nouveau as wide-glazed bay windows in the central part of the facade are the two glazed, thin, cylindrical or polygonal bay windows on the flanks of the facade, known since the 1890s. They were also used in various formal variations during the late Art Nouveau period (Fig. 55), demonstrating an organic transition to the Modern Movement.

The apartment building at Carrer de Enric Granados, 106, built in 1906 according to the design of the architect Domènech Boada i Piera, stands out not only for its characteristic bay window, but also for its impressive portal in the shape of a keyhole reminiscent of the famous entrance of Castel Beranger in Paris. The architect also created a corresponding spatial configuration of the entrance hall in the shape of a horizontal cylinder decorated with rich ornamental paintings. This hallmark of Art Nouveau formal vocabulary, in addition to the already mentioned works of Domènech i Montaner and

Sagnier i Vilavecchia, can also be found in several other Art Nouveau buildings in Barcelona. An ensemble of three Art Nouveau buildings designed by the architect Josep Maria Barenys i Gambús was built on Carrer de Mallorca between 1912 and 1914. In two of them – at Carrer de Mallorca, 304 and 302 – the facades on the ground floor are decorated with round or oval windows (Fig. 56),



Fig. 56. Casa Vallet i Xiró I, Carrer de Mallorca, 302. 1912–1913.
Josep Maria Barenys i Gambús.
Fragment of the facade.

which, together with the architectural details below them, resemble a keyhole. A similar window (Fig. 57) in a residential building at the intersection of Avinguda Diagonal and Carrer de Balmes, which is very visible in the urban environment, built in 1909–1910 according to the design of the architect Joan Josep Hervás i Arizmendi, looks out at passers-by on the facade of Avinguda Diagonal. Behind this window is a dining room. The building itself is sometimes considered neo-Gothic [26]. Rather, its style is neo-Romanesque with Renaissance additions, but in any case, almost “pure” eclecticism. Only the oval window arranges it in the category of Art Nouveau. Windows of the same type, only round, fill all three gables that crown the facade of the apartment house at Rambla de Catalunya, 122 (Fig. 58). The building was built in 1902–1904 according to the design of the architect Josep Domènech i Estapà.

Viewed from a distance, the unusual trencadis-style pediment of the apartment building at Carrer de Llança, 20 (Fig. 59), created in 1912 by the prolific master builder Josep Graners i Prats, also somewhat resembles the shape of a keyhole. Trencadis is a decoration technique widely used by Gaudí, in which pieces of irregularly split coloured ceramic tiles are embedded in a cement or lime mortar surface. Up close, it is clearly visible that the gable is a butterfly with its wings spread wide. The butterfly motif was not uncommon in the Art Nouveau decorative palette. The simple, restrained facade of the building itself, with windows arranged in a uniform rhythm, is rather eclectic.

Art Nouveau in Barcelona can also be sensed in buildings that are absolutely eclectic in terms of architectural finish, but which are distinguished by an unusually dynamic, expressive massing, clearly reflecting a functionally based interior layout. Usually, these buildings have a pronounced silhouette and typical wide-gazed bay windows. The apartment building at Passeig de Gràcia, 27 (1905–1908, master builder Joaquim Codina i Matalí) (Fig. 60), for example, has particularly strongly articulated bay windows on the flanks of the first-floor facade, equipped with various order elements and decorative Baroque reliefs, while the entire facade is saturated with four different types of balconies.

VIII. Pharmacies, Shops, Bars

Barcelona is rich with authentic Art Nouveau pharmacies, cafés, shops and other public service spaces. One of the most striking is the Bolos pharmacy, designed by architect Antoni Falguera i Sivilla in a building designed by Domènech i Estapà on the corner of Rambla de Catalunya and Carrer de Mallorca. The wooden shop windows with entrance doors are topped with stained glass depicting orange trees. The interior ceiling is also decorated

Fig. 57. Casa Pérez Samanillo, Avinguda Diagonal, 502-504 / Carrer de Balmes, 169. 1909–1910. Joan Josep Hervás i Arizmendi. Fragment of the facade.



Fig. 58. Casa Antoni Costa, Rambla de Catalunya, 122. 1902–1904. Josep Domènech i Estapà. Fragment of the facade.

Fig. 59. Casa Fajol, 1912. Casa Fajol, Carrer de Llança, 20. 1912. Master builder Josep Graner i Prat.



Fig. 60. Casa Malagrida, Passeig de Gràcia, 27. 1905–1908. Master builder Joaquim Codina i Matalí.



with paintings of medicinal plants and flowers, but the decorative language of Art Nouveau culminates in the built-in furniture. The keyhole-shaped aperture between the two rooms of the pharmacy (Fig. 61) is particularly effective.

The impressive Art Nouveau sinuous line pattern attracts attention also in the windows and the entrance door of the Argelaguët pharmacy at Carrer de Roger de Llúria, 74. This pharmacy was created by the painter and decorator Josep Vidal i Vidal in 1904–1906. The built-in furniture is a filigree masterpiece of joinery, while the pharmacy ceiling is decorated with plaster bas-reliefs depicting plant motifs.

Authentic evidence of Art Nouveau in the typology of these public spaces is also the Padrell pharmacy at Carrer de Sant Pere Més Baix, 52 (1903, architect Manuel Joaquim Raspall i Mayol), the Puigoriol pharmacy at the corner of Carrer de Girona and Carrer de Mallorca (1913–1914, contractor Marià Pau i Bartoli), the del Carmen pharmacy at the corner of Carrer de la Riera Alta and Carrer del Carme (1914, attributed to Puig i Cadafalch) and several others. Beautiful interpretations of Art Nouveau decorative catalogue present shop windows and fittings of the haberdashery and perfumery shop at Carrer de Santa Anna, 27 (1907), the shop windows and entrance door of the Forn de la Concepción bakery (Fig. 62), created around 1900 on the ground floor of the building at Carrer de Girona, 74, by the artist Josep Suñer i Parera, and the shop window and entrance door of the Forn Sarret pastry shop at the opposite side of the street intersection, created around 1906. Despite the loss of several details, they are still a clearly visible cultural monument of the early 20th century. Several restaurants and bars have also preserved both their original appearance and use. The most famous are the Almirall Bar at Carrer de Joaquín Costa, 33 (Fig. 63) and the Muy Buenas Bar at Carrer del Carme, 63 (Fig. 64).

Fig. 61. Pharmacy Bolos, Rambla de Catalunya, 77. 1902. Antoni Falguera i Sivilla.



Fig. 62. Bakery Forn de la Concepción, Carrer de Girona, 74. Around 1900. Josep Suñer i Parera.

Fig. 63. Bar Almirall, Carrer de Joaquín Costa, 33. Bar shelves.



Fig. 64. Bar Muy Buenas, Carrer del Carme, 63. Entrance.





Fig. 65. Toros Monumental. Gran Vía de las Cortes Catalanas, 749. 1913–1915. Ignasi Mas i Morell un Manuel Joaquim Raspall i Mayol.

Conclusion: Diversity in the European Context

Barcelona – a city with a clearly expressed formal face of the local Art Nouveau (Barcelona Modernista) – was also quite open to both local and external influences. Art Nouveau, like everywhere else, especially in the early stages of its development, could not do without its own decorative vocabulary. The ubiquitous Art Nouveau brands (keyhole shape windows or ornaments, decorative compositions of three or more vertical lines, stylisations of plant motifs, tangles of curved tense or sinuous lines, etc.) are also found in Barcelona in various variations. However, general clichés are always presented in a local interpretation. Individual buildings that attract attention with a more unusual appearance in the local context usually resemble something seen in Brussels, Paris or Vienna.

One of the examples of the uniqueness of Barcelona's Art Nouveau architecture is the already unique building itself – the bullring Toros Monumental (1913–1915, architects Manuel Joaquim Raspall i Mayol and Ignasi Mas i Morell). It is located at the intersection of Gran Vía de las Cortes Catalanas and Carrer Marina (Fig. 65). The colourful facades of the amphitheatre-type sports building in the literal sense of the word are a transfer of traditional Mudéjar art motifs to the pan-European Art Nouveau aesthetics.

The features most characteristic of Barcelona cityscape are the bevelled corners of blocks and the fully glazed bay windows, which are usually attached by balconies and either emphasize the central axis of the facade at the level of the first or second floor, sometimes forming a stepped composition, or rise to almost the height of the entire building on the flanks of the facade.

Typical for Barcelona Art Nouveau is the expressive silhouette of buildings with a dentil parapet, the outline

of which recalls both the battlements of medieval fortifications and something from the world of Arabic art.

Barcelona building stock also contains examples that directly resemble the image of the Modern Movement buildings of the second half of the 20th century. The most visible proof of Art Nouveau as the beginning of the Modern Movement or functionalism in the Art Nouveau architectural heritage of Barcelona is the Department Store at Carrer de Pelai, 54.

Although Barcelona Art Nouveau is generally quite visually unified, there are distinct differences in the work of notable Barcelona Art Nouveau masters.

Unconventional worldview of Antoni Gaudí was almost imaginary, each of his buildings was a novelty in architecture, but his work hardly fits into the traditional categories of Art Nouveau image. Gaudí directly influenced contemporaries to focus on the search for a national identity through the prism of the architect's unique personal vision.

Josep Puig i Cadafalch developed his Art Nouveau creations mainly as free compositions on a late Gothic theme.

A very versatile personality was Lluís Domènech i Montaner. Compared to Gaudí, his architecture is less sculptural, but more tectonic and rooted in the traditional expression of local architecture. Many of his buildings stand out with fabulous richness and variety of decorations, and are expressively articulated. Despite it, his architecture is structurally logical and coherent. He contributed much to the search for national identity and introduced various structural innovations.

The prominent architect Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas, who was already active during the eclectic period, created several of Barcelona's Art Nouveau icons in the early 20th century. In particular, the facade of his building at Rambla de Catalunya, 54, in fact, a curtain wall that visually

resembles the contemporary glazed facades of the Modern Movement.

One of the most prolific Barcelona Art Nouveau architects was Enric Sagnier i Villavecchia. His creative oeuvre was unusually broad; he freely mastered the language of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque, but Eclectic buildings by him also show distinctly innovative Art Nouveau solutions relatively early on. Most of his Art Nouveau buildings have restrained, simple, balanced facades that usually feature different expressive bay windows or apertures with the surrounds which are shaped in characteristic curved and tense Art Nouveau lines.

Barcelona can be proud of the highest quality Art Nouveau monuments created by world-famous architects, but Art Nouveau nowhere determines the cityscape in this wonderful city to the extent that it does, for example, in Riga, Helsinki or in some places also in Prague, Budapest and Hamburg. Traditions were mostly stronger than novelties. Even on Via Laietana – a street that was completely “broken” through the old city from 1908 to 1913 – only a few buildings in their architecture fully reflect the modernist spirit of the era. However, Art Nouveau is a testament to the pride and creative abilities of the Catalan people. It is a bright page in the history of the nation and a significant contribution to the accumulation of world cultural values.

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He was a member of the editorial boards of many scientific publications, scientific councils and advisory boards. Professor Krastiņš had worked out a number of architectural projects, participated in the planning of the Riga Master Plan and conducted investigations of many cultural monuments. He is the author of more than 730 scientific works published in 23 countries and 31 books on various topics of architectural history and theory. He is an Honorary member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

“Barcelona Art Nouveau from a Nordic Perspective” was Jānis Krastiņš’s final submission to Architecture & Urban Planning before he passed away on 13 August 2025.

Note: Article layout proofreading and final corrections were done by Prof. Sandra Treija.