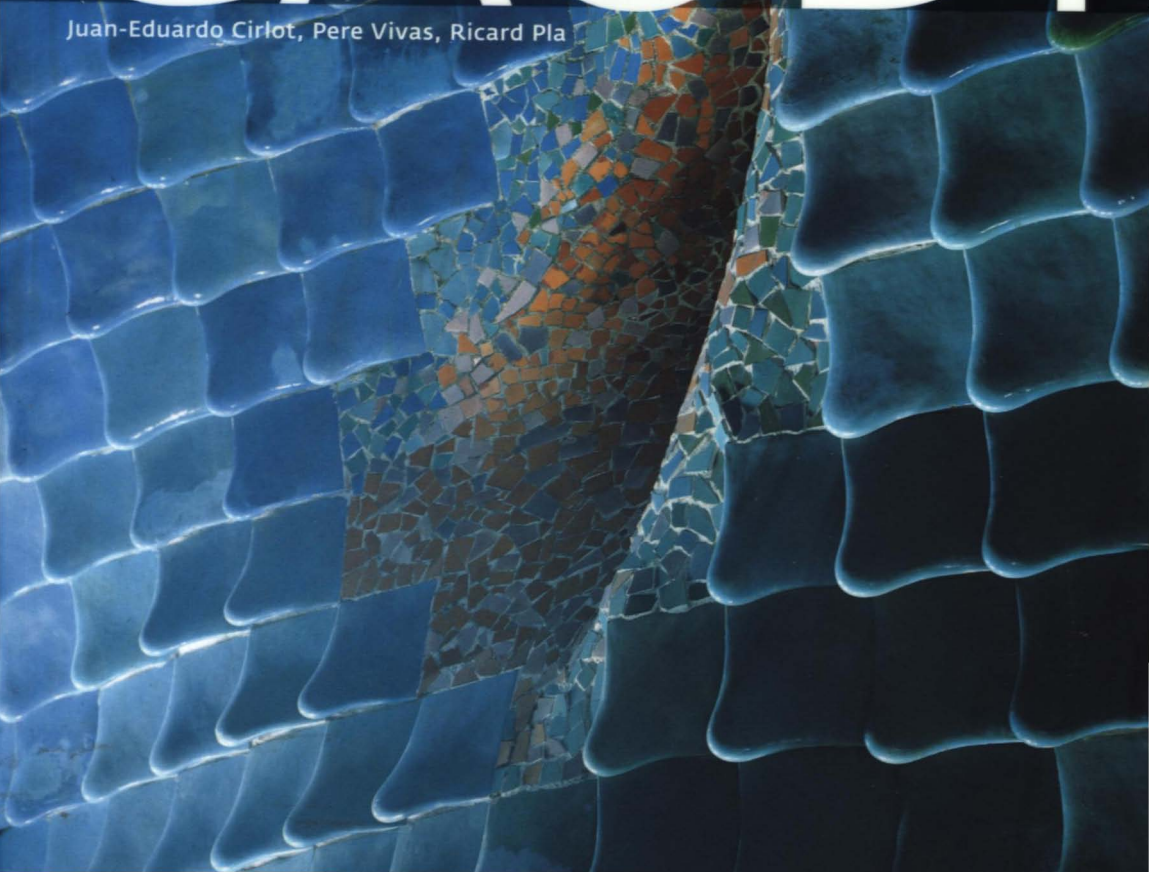


COMPLETE WORKS

English

GAUDÍ

Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, Pere Vivas, Ricard Pla



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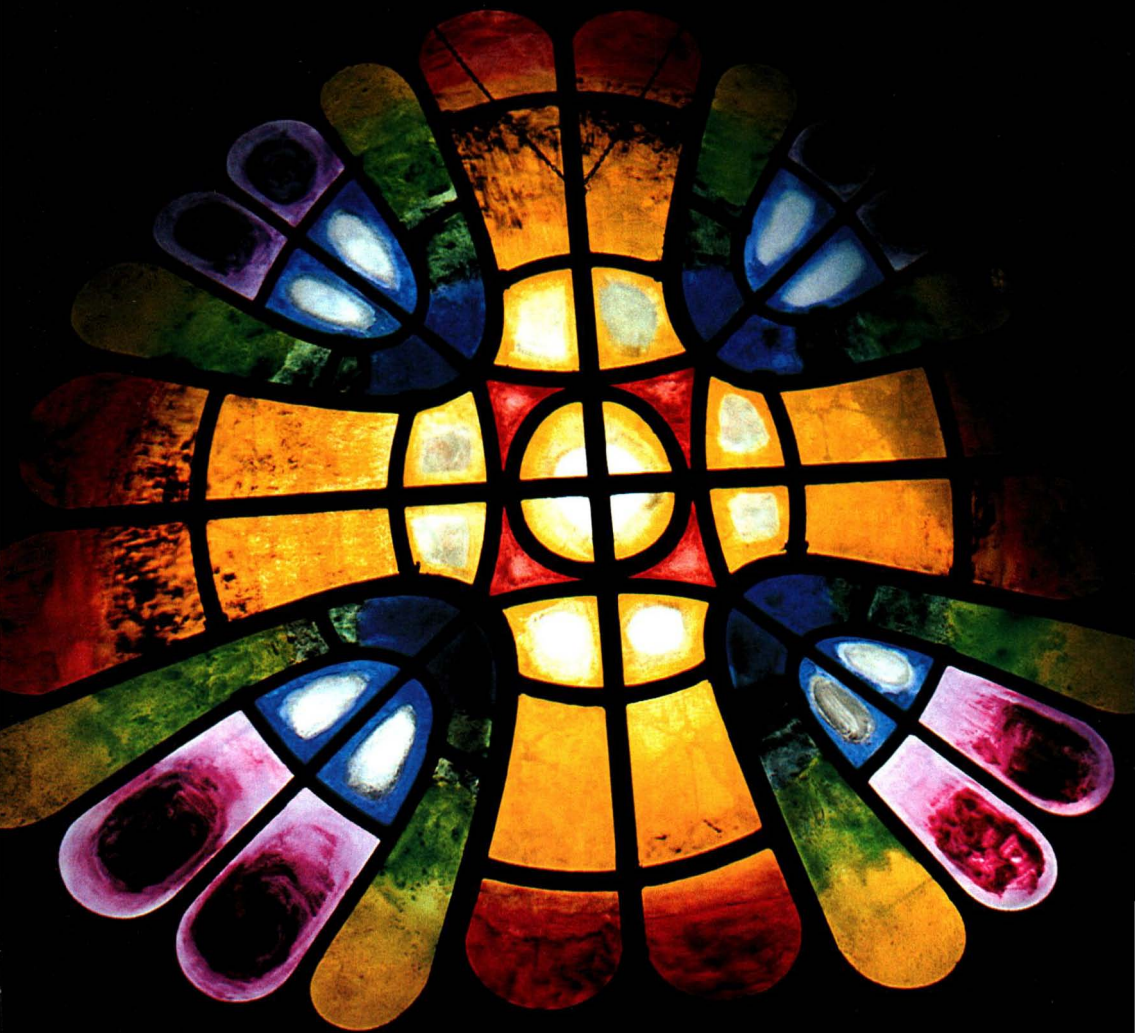
Introduction to his architecture

Text Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, photography Pere Vivas, Ricard Pla

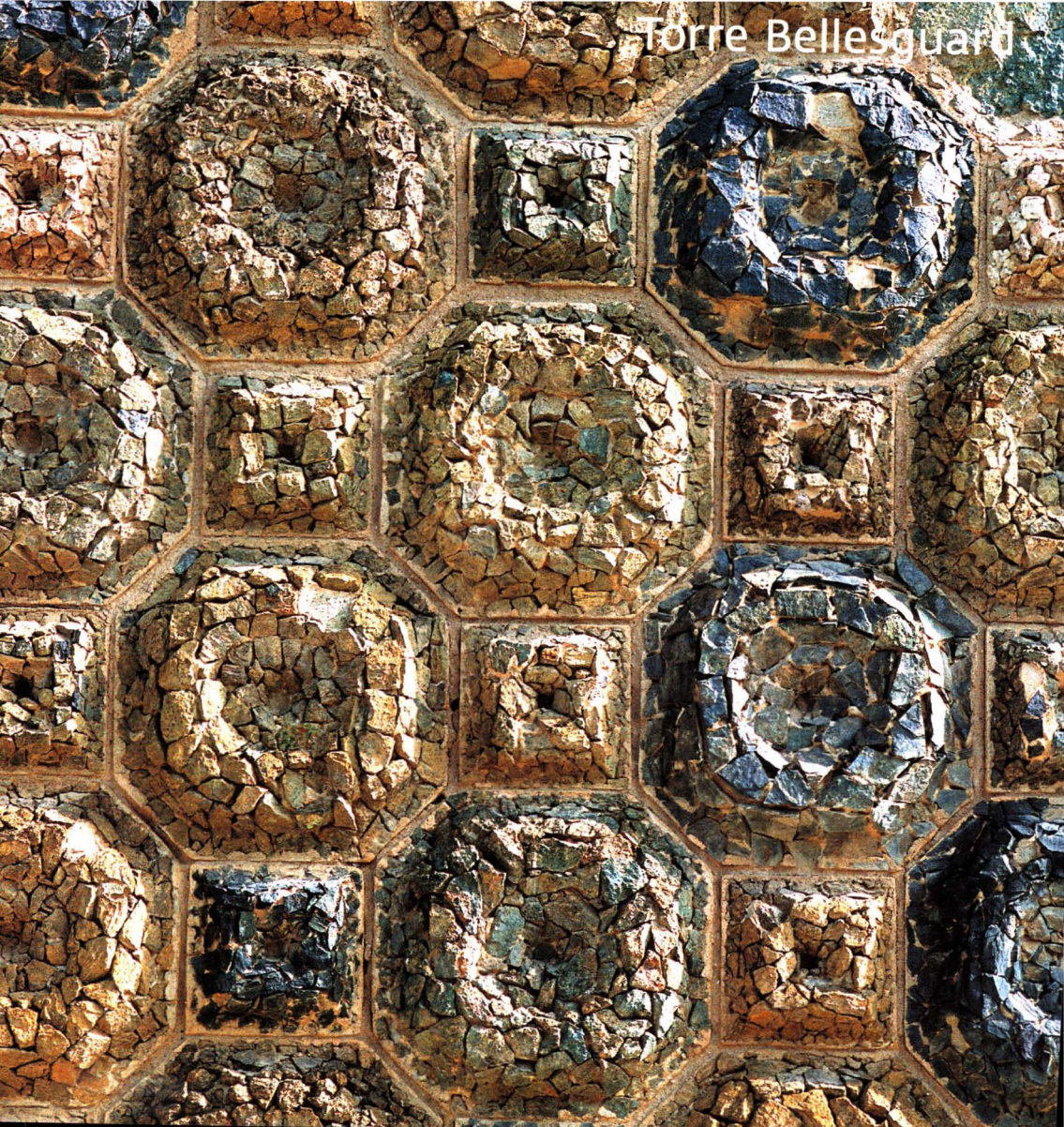
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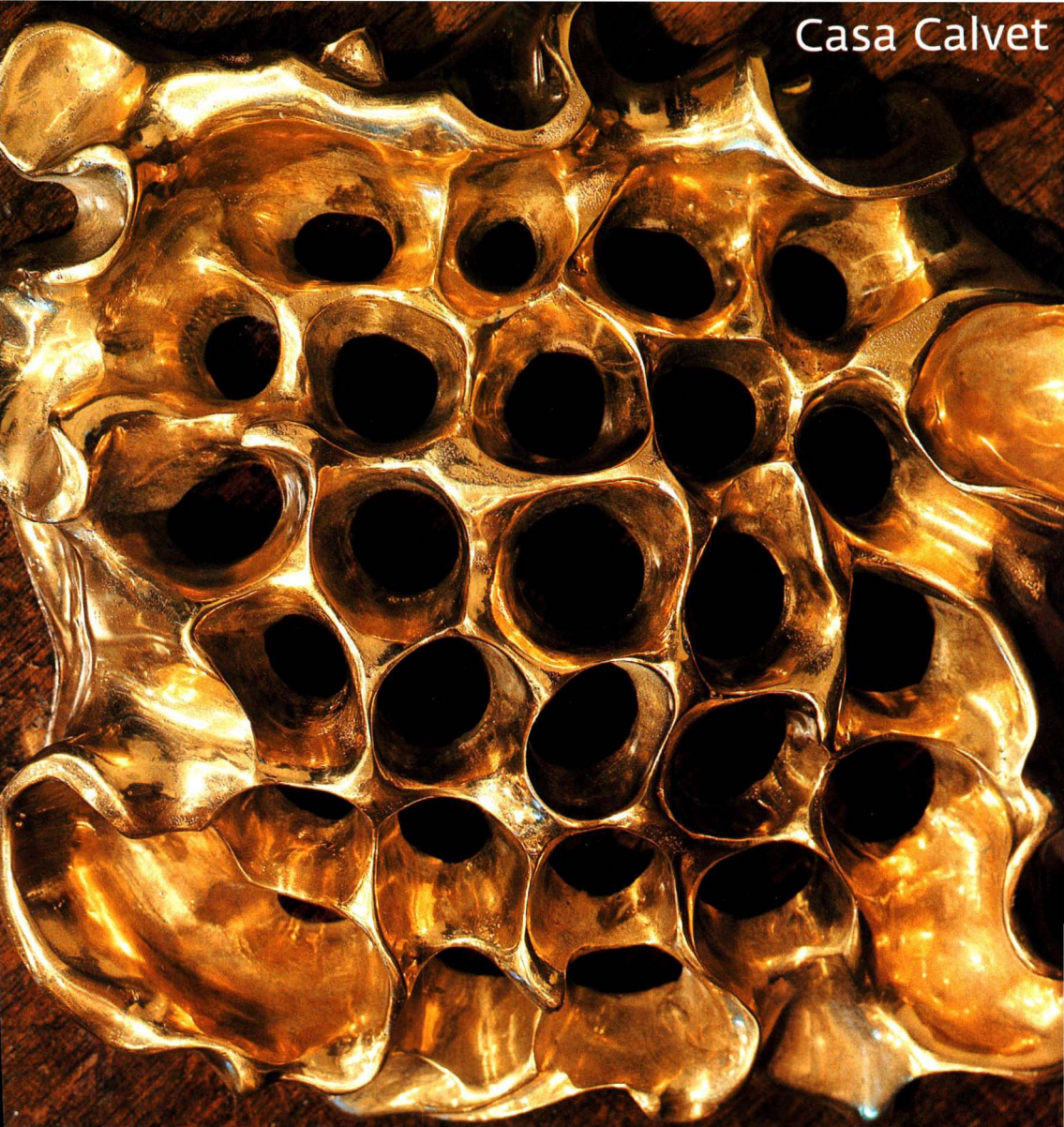
Cripta de la Colònia Güell



Torre Bellesguard



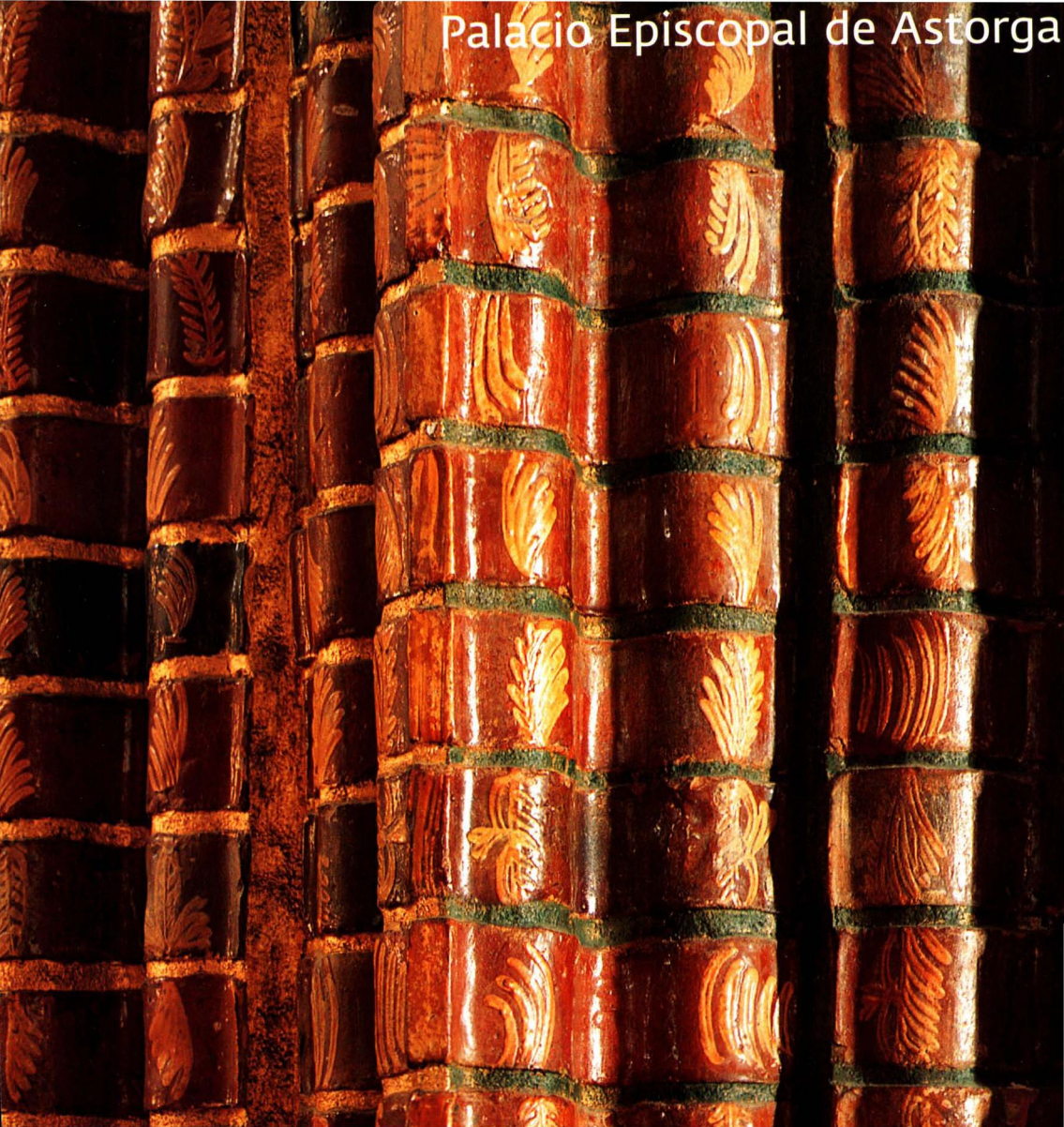
Casa Calvet

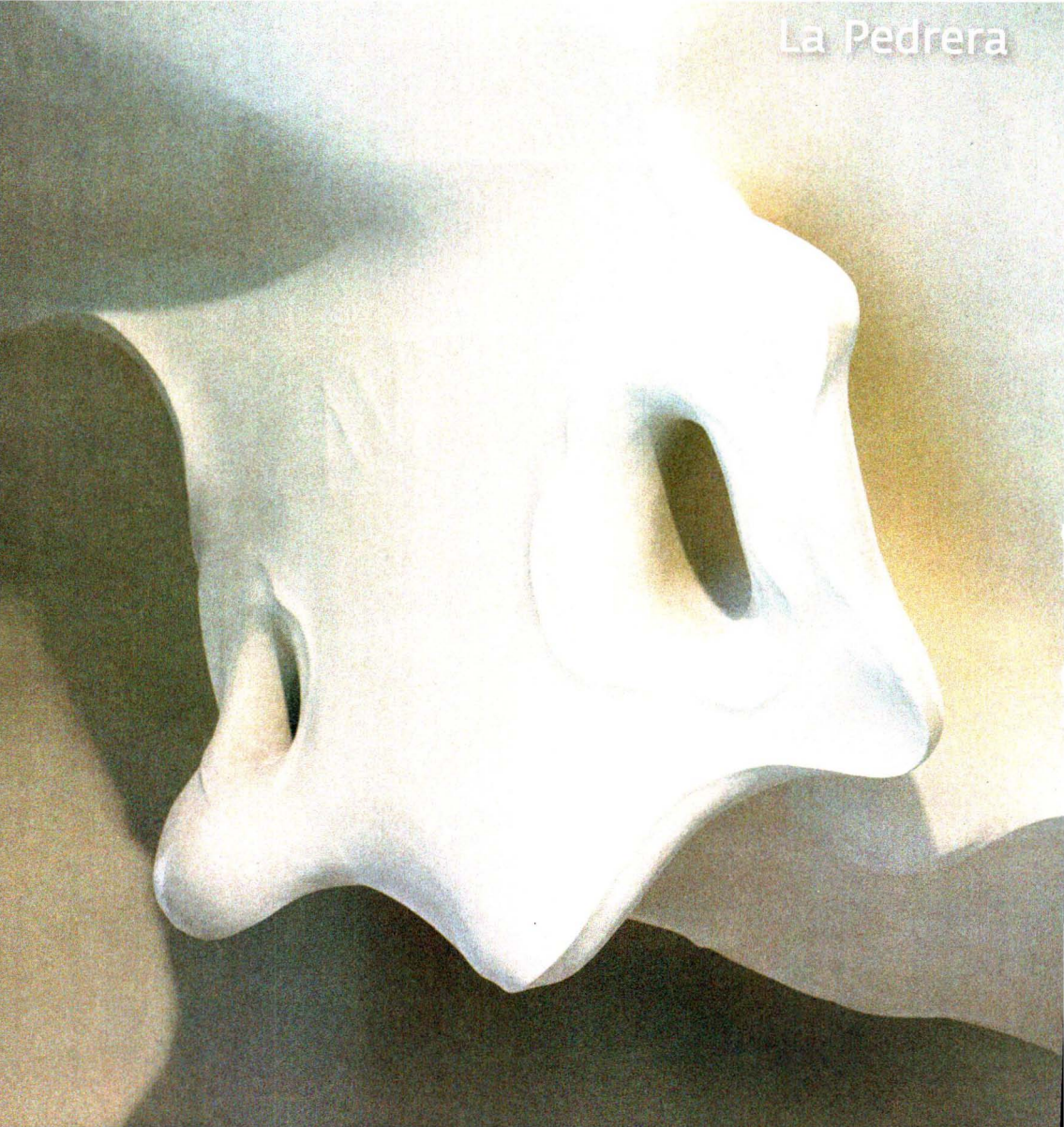


Casa Batlló



Palacio Episcopal de Astorga







Celler Güell



El Capricho



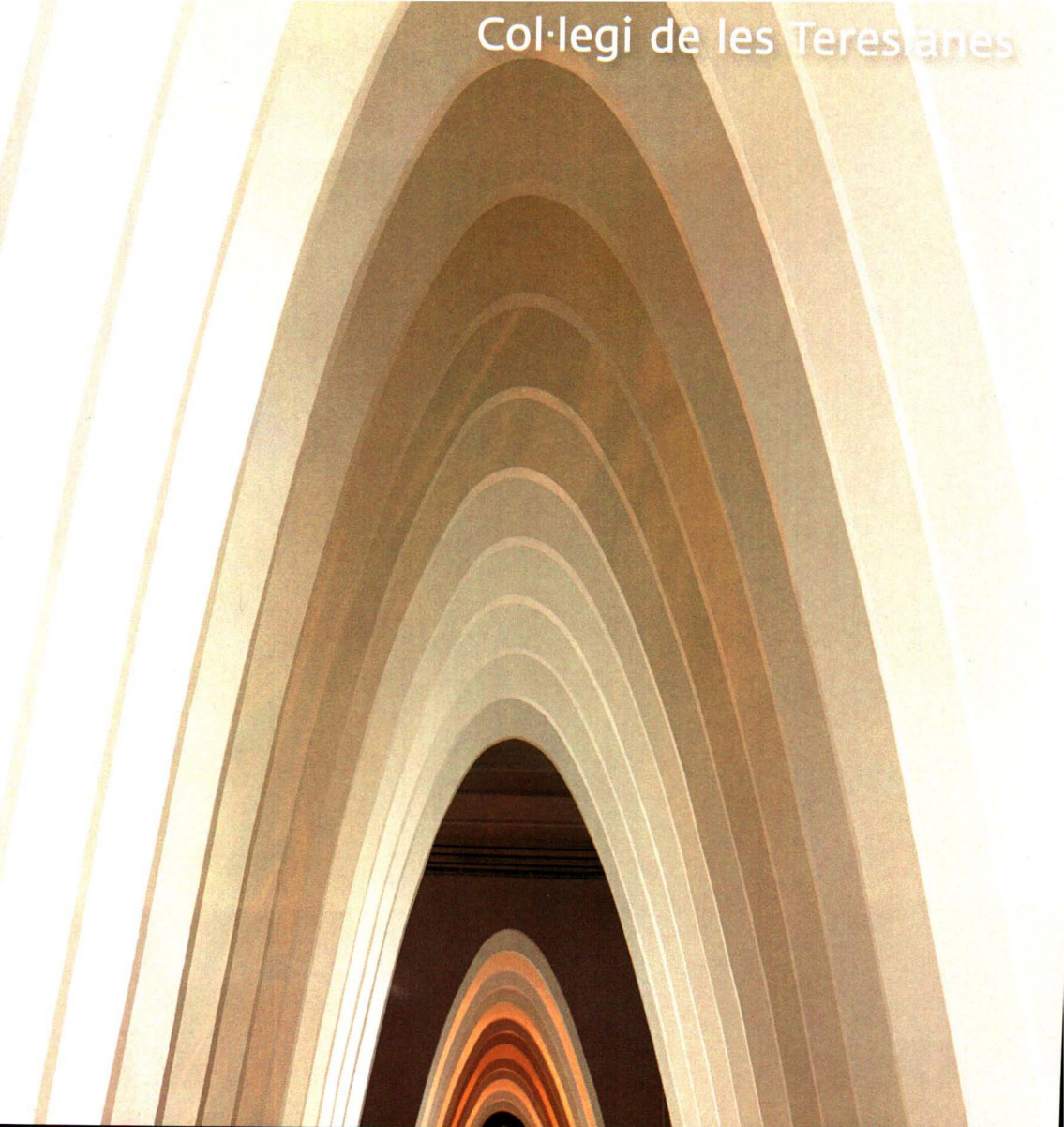
Catedral de Mallorca



Basílica de la Sagrada Família



Col·legi de les Teresianes



Casa Botines



Casa Vicens



Pavellons de la Finca Güell





GAUDÍ

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Introduction to Gaudí's architecture

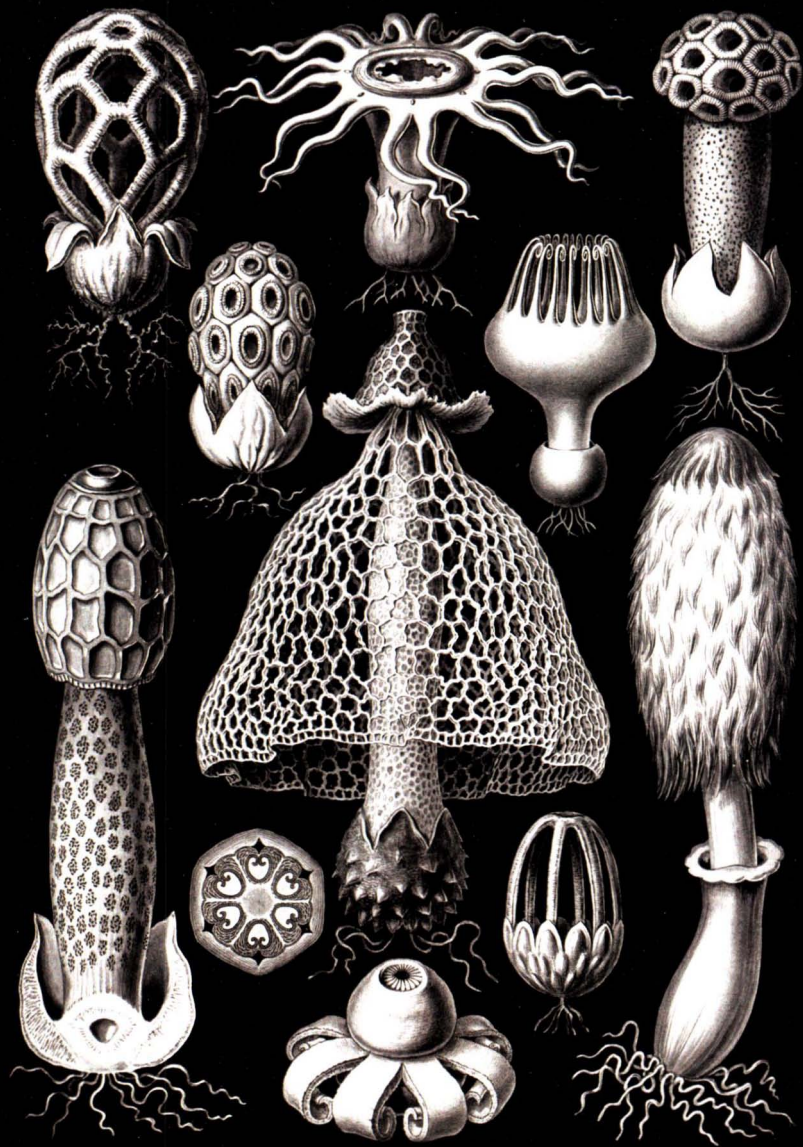
There is a shroud of mystery surrounding Gaudí. In all probability, the first mist preventing us from gaining access to his work is the intrinsic mysteriousness of all genius and, at the end of the day, of all human spirit. The situation is complicated by the well-known fact that Gaudí wished to create an aura of silence around his persona, while, at the same time as maintaining this secretiveness—in other words, the annihilation of his fundamental values—gave expression and symbolisation to his moods and incredible mental power. Gaudí, despite his closeness to us in terms of time, rises before us surrounded by the revered magic which Jung called the *manna* personality. He is the wise man, the enlightened doctor—a trait that draws him close to Ramon Llull, another mysterious Catalan lost in the mists of time since the 13th century—; he is the artist whose superiority not only stems from both intellectual and spiritual possibilities but which sprouts, as a way of describing it, from the total and whole transformation of what he did and who he was. However, the second shroud of mystery lies in his particular era. Indeed, although close in time, his work was more a culmination of the long process that began with the rise of Christianity and pre-Romanesque art than the beginnings of our own times. And this, despite the fact that Gaudí's work, as an authentic creation of genius, or in other words, that which *generates*, gave us the rules and premonitions for a new concept in art, morphology and *pathos*. One thing, however, are these shapes rising from the heart of his work and another very distinct factor is the whole of this work as an expression of a period. The serious caesura that separates the Modernist period from ours could be explained by stylistic, social or political traits. Modernist art can be discovered in the shaping of the 19th century and appears indistinct in the work of some painters, especially that of Cézanne (1839–1906). We will say only one thing. The Modernist period still belonged, to a great extent, to the cultural eclecticism of the second half of the 19th century, based on admitting multiplicity and com-

plexity, in short, that which is aged. In contrast, our era comes from a youthful demand, of a break with the past, of the reconquest of a new simplicity, of the rejection of the complex, to a greater or lesser extent. The mere contemplation of Gaudí's works, despite the profound inner and obvious links that join them, despite their unique expression of a particular era, tests this multiplicity and complexity that our feelings about the world want to reject. We say want because in this word there coexists, despite everything, a certain juxtaposition of distinct but nevertheless contradictory elements: functionalism and organic architecture and abstract painting and informal use of matter, non-figurative ascesis and surreal Baroque. The perceptible differences in Gaudí's creative work are undoubtedly due to perfectly justified distinct factors: the siting of the work and the objective respect the architect has for local peculiarities and technical traditions. It has been clearly observed that outside Catalonia he never used this a la Catalan brick vaulting, which are a precedent for current shells of buildings. Gaudí's work is also influenced by different eras: the Mudejar style of the earlier period and expressive morphology in the golden age of the Casa Milà, the Park Güell and the crypt of the church of the Colònia Güell. Nevertheless, at the same time, there is an intrinsic and I would dare to say "sacred monstrosity" in the variety of Gaudí's work that we would never find in Gropius or Moore, nor in the architects and artists who are recognised as having the most ability in variation and even contradiction, such as Frank Lloyd Wright or Picasso. This is because Gaudí's diversity does not lie in merely intellectual or instinctive terrain. The central point of the mystery of Gaudí's personality resides precisely in this innate ability to discover, reveal and recreate *a n entire universe*. More than for reasons of his destiny or the influences of his upbringing, which must have brought him close to God enough to turn him into a mystical and pious person, it must have been the living discovery —compensated by his deep humility— of the divine factor that resided in his inner self. His own magnificent ability for invention that filled him with pleasure must have pushed him towards that Divinity with which he felt connected to the innermost depths of his whole being.



Caricature of Gaudí published in "La Publicitat" of the 13 June 1926

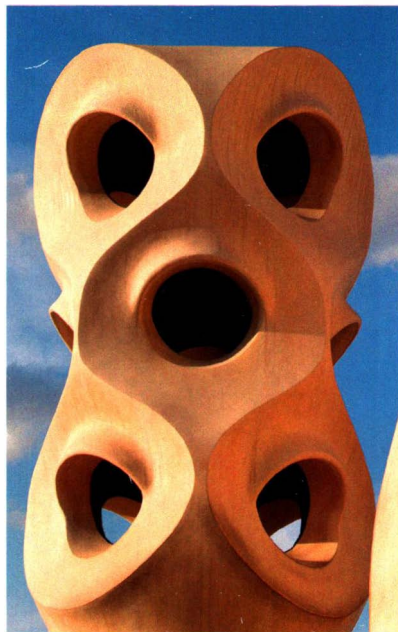




Ideological elements of his time

We have certainly not combed Gaudí's reading—who would be able to—or even his travels. Nevertheless, on the other hand, we are sure that the explanation we seek could not be found in such sources. It has been seen that brilliant people, as yet another factor of their authority, have an incredible informative speed. This ability enabled Balzac, for example, to describe thousands of places and situations he saw without realising it with a "capacity of register" inaccessible to the majority of human beings. The ideological elements that "existed" in Gaudí's time must have been captured, deepened and analysed unconsciously and subliminally, continuously and profoundly effectively. Some of these elements have been described. For example, from his known studies, that of the theoretical works of Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879), or the contact he kept with his favourite teachers: Francesc Llorens i Barba (1820–1872), who taught him philosophy and literature; and Pablo Milà i Fontanals (1810–1883), with whom he studied the theory and history of art. The latter's concepts and ideas are well known, based on integrating art into culture, thus breaking the isolation of artistic acts in order to incorporate them into daily life, a tendency which Gaudí had no option but be interested in. Regarding Llorens i Barba, we know that he preached a spiritualist doctrine, in which philosophy was not a specialisation but a piece of "complete knowledge". Some of this thinker's ideas are nearly enough to explain part of Gaudí's ideology: an ideology unformulated in written terms but patent and active in his architectural-expressive creativity. It is hard to believe, but for Llorens i Barba, "philosophical belief" was a *dark and subjective state*, a mystical doctrine if there is one. He believed, alternatively, in the "activity of substances subject to the first cause". And with this he approached, but without accepting everything that it involved, the monism of Ernst Haeckel, whose ideas and investigations "floated" around the air in Gaudí's formative years. Haeckel (1834–1919) fought for a biological conception of the universe in which matter was integrated, not in life, but

in thought, a theory that Teilhard de Chardin, later on, often endorsed in part. On the other hand, Haeckel published many studies about natural forms (protozoans, radiolarians, medusas, etc.). When Folguera tells us that Gaudí, as well as history, studied "nature", we should suppose that he would have been interested in the most representative works of his time, in which the morphological obsession of pre-modernism had an abundant and nutritious grazing land. Between 1860 and 1890, Haeckel published numerous books of the morphology of natural beings, some of which were translated into Spanish, such as the *General Morphology of Organisms* (Barcelona, 1887). In our opinion, Gaudí's work shows an advance from traditional architecture towards new architectural structures based on mechanics and experiments such as the catenaries but, at the same time, and through the medieval and oriental tendencies in style, *openly enters the world of natural morphology which does not copy but transforms and integrates it into an architectural or structural-ornamental factor*. The colour used in his polychrome often reminds one more of the underwater flora and fauna than of the natural elements that could normally be seen. The rounding off of the bell towers of the Sagrada Família possess the qualities and drive of the medusa before that of the flower, and structures of radiolarian were clearly used by Gaudí on specific details, such as the peepholes of the Casa Calvet. There is no doubt, and this backs up what we have said of Gaudí's intrinsic complexity, that other very distinct ideological currents converge in his thought. This explains the spiritualist tendency, which had its roots in Celtic culture, the English Pre-Raphaelite doctrine (the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848) and which, through the "Art and Crafts" movement of William Morris in 1861, rekindled by Ashbee in 1888, and the architects and decorators of the Glasgow School, reached Catalonia continuously to have a long-lasting influence. However, what could have been a dramatic



Detail of one of the tops of the flat roof of La Pedrera