



Casa Vicens



El Capricho



Pavellons Güell



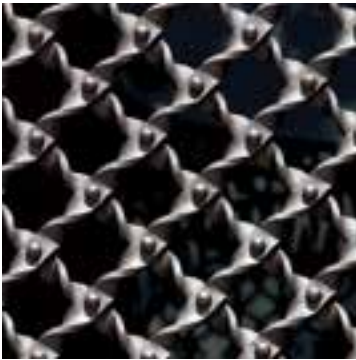
Palau Güell



Col·legi de les Teresianes



Palacio Episcopal de Astorga



Casa Botines



Cellers Güell



Casa Calvet



Torre Bellesguard



Park Güell



Catedral de Mallorca



Casa Batlló



La Pedrera



Cripta de la Colònia Güell



Basílica de la Sagrada Família



11 exclusive videos:

Look at Antoni Gaudí's works on your smartphone or tablet.

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Singular architect

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GAUDÍ Singular architect

Despite the vast amount written in recent decades about the architecture of Antoni Gaudí (Reus, 1852–Barcelona, 1926) and despite the relative closeness in time of his work, the perception that the non-specialised public has of the architect and his creations is surrounded by a halo of legend, which, while increasing the admiration for his figure and his work in all the corners of the world, at the same time does not provide a clear positioning in the scheme of western art history beyond a general and ambiguous “modernism”.

Gaudí was a contemporary of Van Gogh, Matisse, Gauguin and Cézanne, postimpressionists and initiators of modern art, and Henri H. Richardson, William Le Baron Jenney and Louis H. Sullivan, creators of the Chicago School with the first modern skyscrapers; he produced his principal works (La Pedrera, Park Güell, the church of the Colonia Güell or the schools of the Sagrada Família) at the same time that Picasso and Braque introduced cubism and some years before the emblematic expressionist buildings

of Rudolf Steiner (the second Goetheanum) or Erich Mendelsohn (the Einstein Tower); he introduced the modular construction with prefabricated elements 20 years before Lloyd Wright in Hollyhock House or Casa Barnsdall (1922), and he applied the criteria of integrating environmental factors of the site (use, function, native materials or constructive processes) in the creation of his buildings half a century before Scandinavian architects or Lloyd Wright himself formalised the movement of “organic architecture”.

Where, then, can we place Gaudí? George R. Collins (1960) states that although Gaudí has his explanation in the historical context of the Catalonia of the second half of the 19th century, as an artist he is a unique case, without forerunners, like all geniuses, and without almost any disciples or followers beyond his collaborators and often friends of the grand master (Francesc Berenguer, Josep Maria Jujol, Joan Rubió Bellver, Domènec Sugrañes, Lluís Bonet, Isidre Puig Boada, Joan Bergós, Francesc Folguera, Cèsar Martinell, Josep F. Ràfols) who shared his work in



The Sunflowers, Vincent van Gogh, 1888.

El Capricho, Antoni Gaudí, 1883-1885.



Water lilies, Claude Monet, 1895-1926.

Casa Batlló, Antoni Gaudí, 1898-1900.



and publication in English in 1956 and 1957) and, above all —the works of Martinell and Hitchcock were very brief— George R. Collins, who in 1960 published, in English, the first monograph about Gaudí.

The world could ignore Gaudí but Gaudí was up to date with what was going on. He knew of the work of John Ruskin —with whom he coincided ideologically on the importance of the spiritual side of art—; he knew the works of the symbolists, the pre-Raphaelites, William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, Viollet-le-Duc and his theories of restoration —all of them referents of Catalan Modernism—, and also of the French impressionists (façade of Casa Batlló) or the Chicago School (curtain wall of La Pedrera); and was well aware of the proposals of Le Corbusier, for example, of whom he stated “was a builder of boxes”. Gaudí, however, carried out his work with independence and originality and transcended the narrow frameworks of styles. In the words of Daniel Giralt-Miracle, general curator of the Gaudí International

Year (2002), the architect was “a powerful and excessive artist, capable of breaking with the loyalty to historical styles and of rethinking the very essence of architecture reconsidering materials, procedures, techniques, systems of calculus or geometric repertoires”.

Gaudí —despite the first thing to attract one’s attention to his work being the use of an exhilarating polychrome or very expressive naturalist forms, almost gifted with movement— is a creator ruled by the logic of rationality and functionalism and was the first architect who used the principles of ruled geometry of warped surfaces (which enabled him to imitate the forms of nature) applied to the construction of buildings, as well as that already mentioned regarding modular construction or the application of integrating environmental factors. He worked forming multidisciplinary teams with which he shared the responsibility of the work and encouraged them to intervene decisively (as in the case of Jujol on the bench of Park Güell or the ceilings of La Pedrera, to give just one



Goetheanum,
Rudolf Steiner, 1924-1928.

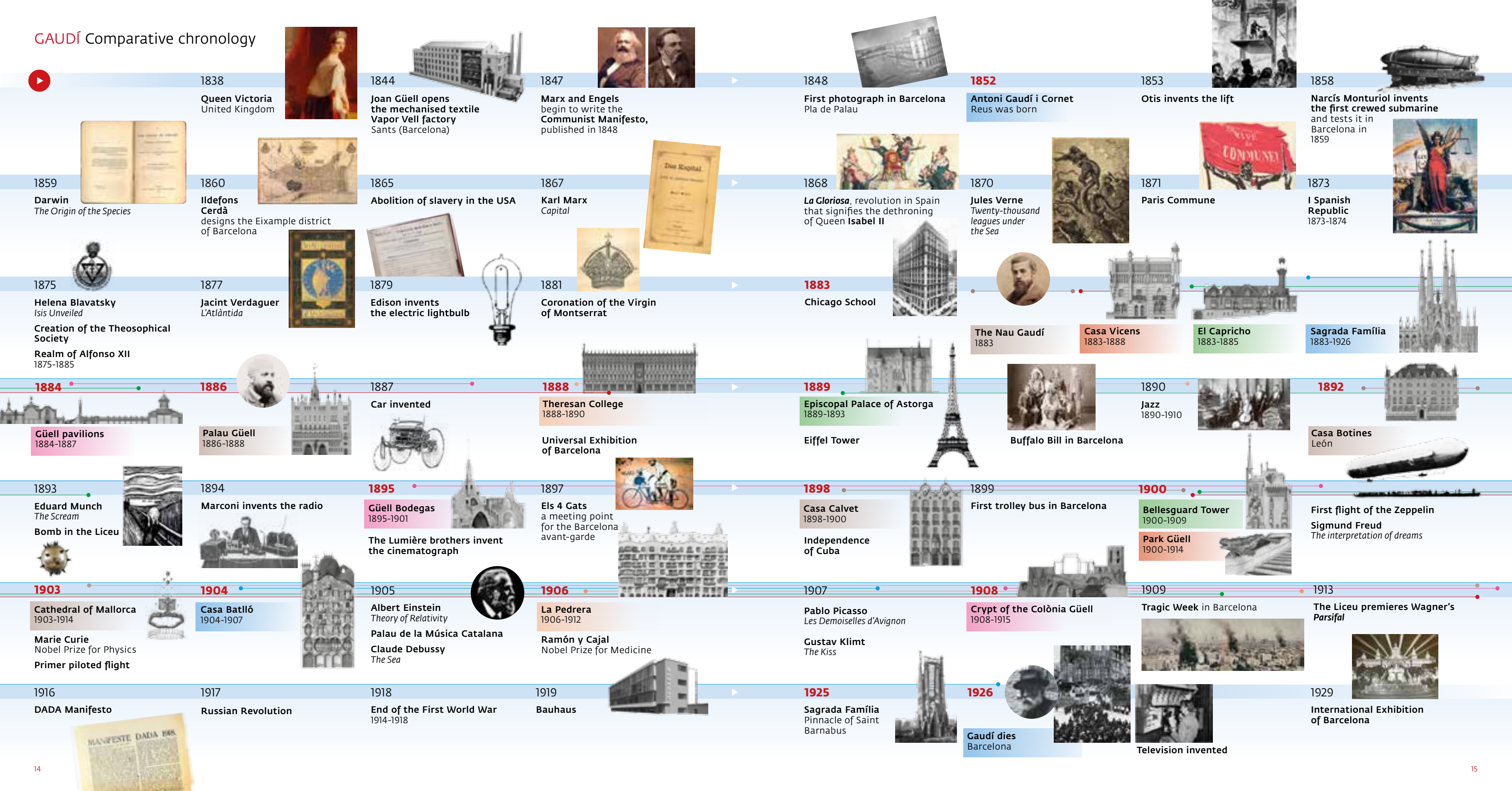


Einstein Tower,
Erich Mendelsohn, 1917-1924.



La Pedrera,
Antoni Gaudí, 1906-1912.

GAUDÍ Comparative chronology



Casa Vicens

1883-1888

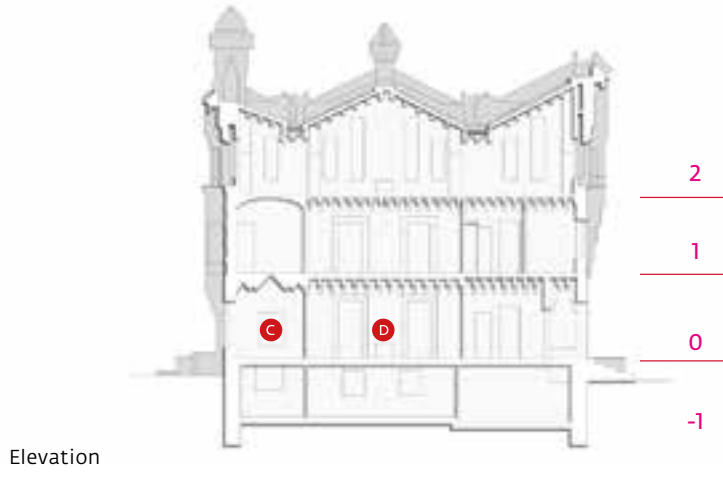
Isolated residential building built as a summer residence.
It is structured on four levels: basement, ground floor and two upper floors, used as a storage area, living quarters, bedrooms and servant quarters, respectively.
The house has everything it needs for summer comfort, such as excellent ventilation on the inside and a large garden which originally included an artificial waterfall and the popular Santa Rita fountain, both demolished when the garden was dug up to make room for new constructions.

Considered as being Gaudí's first important piece of work, it is designed with great constructive simplicity, with a dominance of the straight line over the curve and with a notable emphasis of Arab-inspired aspects, such as the interior *almocárabes*, an interlaced design in plaster, and the outside solid brickwork.
The building is constructed of solid masonry walls, the floors with bricked up vaulting in their lowest part and with wooden beams on the higher floors and roofing.

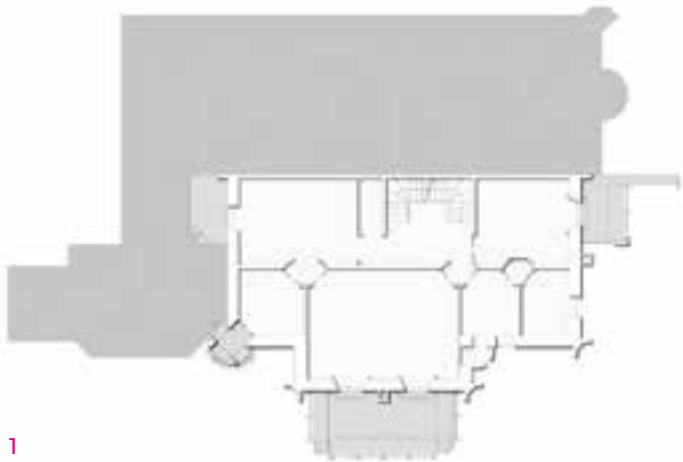
Among the decorative work features the colourist ceramic covering on the *Façades*, which reproduce the flora of the site alternating between white and green tiles, as well as the decoration of the gallery that opens out to the garden, the smoking room and the dining room, for which Gaudí designed part of the furnishings.
Registered in the Catalogue of Historic and Artistic Architectural Heritage of Barcelona. National Heritage Site since 1969. UNESCO World Heritage Site



French marigold (*Tagetes patula*) on the tiles of the *façade*.



Elevation



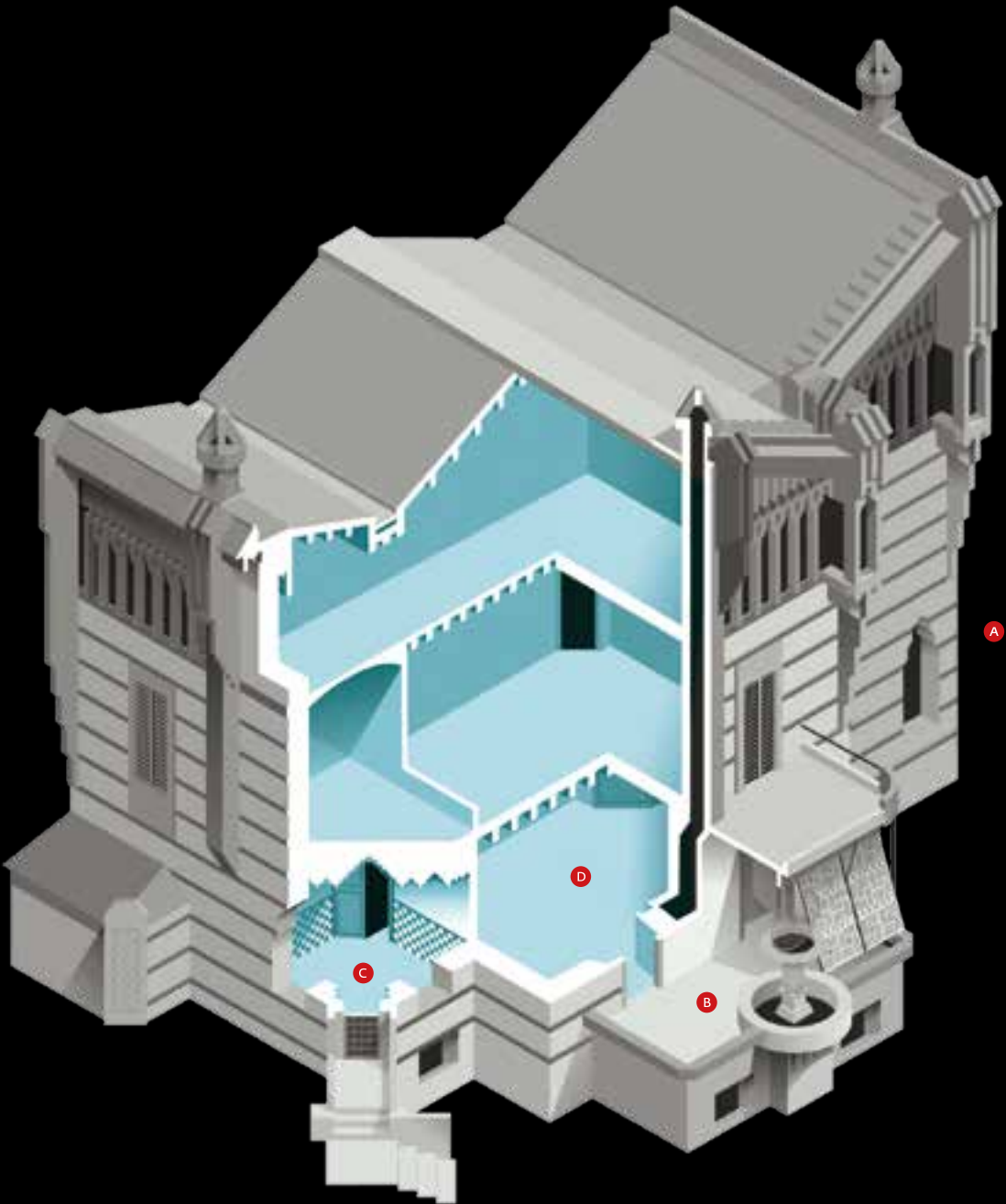
1
First floor



0
Ground floor

Casa Vicens
Manuel Vicens Montaner, promoter
20th of February 1883, project
1883-1888, construction
Collaborators:
Llorenç Matamala (sculptor)
Francesc Torrescassana (painter), Joan Oños (iron worker)

- A Entrance
- B Gallery
- C Smoking room
- D Dining room





This extraordinary salamander, a legendary animal packed with symbolism, works as the overflow of the deposit placed below the colonnade.



The Hypostyle Hall, a very personal homage by Gaudí to Doric style, was the space planned for the weekly market of the urbanisation.

Casa Batlló

1904-1907

Consolidation of a style

Placed beside Casa Amatller (1898), by the architect Puig i Cadafalch, and Casa Lleó Morera (1902), by Domènech i Montaner, Casa Batlló, built later, forms together with the other buildings, the “apple of discord”, a block (*manzana* in Spanish means both apple and block) of the Eixample district in which these three important pieces of work converged, showing the diversity in aesthetic orientation of Barcelona’s modernist architects.

The maelstrom of urban development at the time and the clients’ desire for ostentation had a notable influence in the way that artists, in some form or other, became participants in a competition. Gaudí, aware of this phenomenon, worked with a certain irony and responded to the straight forms of the neighbouring Casa Amatller by creating a sinuous Façade which undulated like an enormous multicolour sail. However, in order not to break completely with the adjoining building, the architect moved the tower with the lettering of the Sagrada Família – originally designed to be in the centre – and designed a moulding where the two houses joined.

Gaudí wanted his pieces of work to be living works and, influenced by the theories of John Ruskin, thought that this was shown through colour and form, qualities that are dazzlingly expressed in the Casa Batlló. For the colour of the Façade facing, the architect used ceramic discs from Mallorca and glass of different shades arranged in *trencadís* mosaic. The outstanding appearance of the polychromy in the Casa Batlló reminds one of the colourist essences of the contemporary artistic movements such as the Fauvism of Matisse, or the water lily series of Claude Monet.

The curved forms, producing the sensations of sinuosity and movement, predominate all over

the building and the Façade in particular, which was chiselled away by the workers until it became an undulating surface.

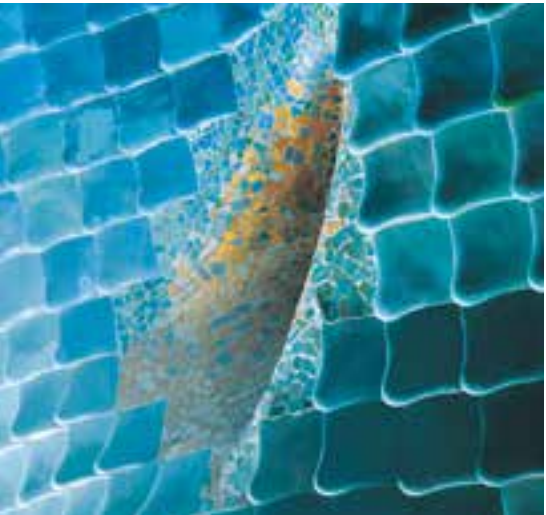
The thin columns of the galleries are tibias from which plantlife begins to sprout, the balconies are bare skulls, the doors to the flats have carved relief forms of bones and the wooden banister on the private stairway is the skeletal form of a gigantic backbone. These kinds of elements are symbols of death, but also of life and regeneration. This fact is highly significant since the Casa Batlló is, in a way, a work of regeneration that is raised over the dead styles of the past. Any reference to historicism had now been finally overcome. The language used was totally modern and its relationship was no longer established with the historicist academicism and nineteenth-century style of the past, but with the new realities of the modern 20th century.



Postcard published in 1907.



Detail of the balconies in which the iron panel seems like the natural volumes of parchment.



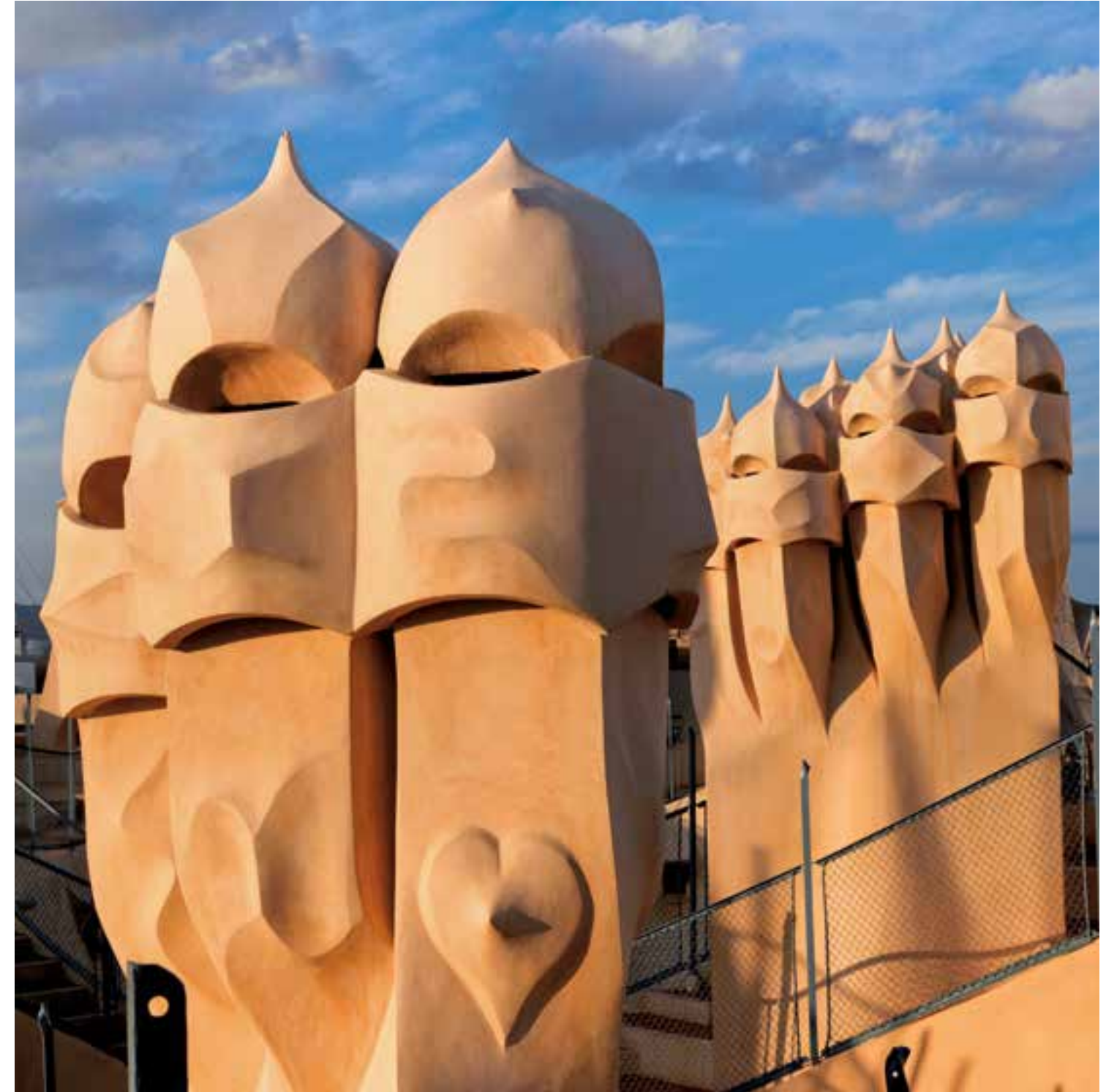
Scales of the roof interrupted by the *trencadís*.

The four-armed cross over a bulbous structure stands out in the crowning of the building.





The stairway exits that lead to the main façade are covered with *trencadís* of white marble and culminate in spiral forms crowned by crosses directed at the four cardinal points.



Perhaps the most popular figures of the flat roof of La Pedrera are the chimneys, plastered with lime mortar in ochre tones, which seem like silent guards that water erosion and the wind has sculpted in rock.

Basílica de la Sagrada Família

1883-1926

(currently under construction)

“My client is in no hurry”

In 1882 the Spiritual Association of Devotees of Saint Joseph, founded by Josep Maria Bocabella in 1866, began the construction of a temple in dedication to the Holy Family, or Sagrada Família. The temple, which should have been surrounded by gardens, had a solid purpose: “To awaken the drowsy hearts from their lack of enthusiasm, to exalt Faith, to give warmth to Charity, to make a contribution so that our Lord takes pity on the nation and that the nation, supported by its Catholic roots, thinks, preaches and practices the Virtues”. In 1882, the architect Francesc de Paula del Villar began work on the crypt although a series of disagreements with the Board of Works about technical aspects of the project led to his resignation. In November 1883, Antoni Gaudí, then a young man of 31, took over the supervision of building work. He was recommended for the post by Joan Martorell although he didn’t sign the first official document as architect of the Sagrada Família until 1884. Over the ground plan initiated by Villar, Gaudí erected the crypt maintaining the original neo-gothic style, although he im-



Original drawing by Gaudí of the finished temple.

proved some aspects in reference to the lighting. He surrounded the crypt with a pit that would allow natural light to enter while also protecting it from dampness. On the 19th of March 1885, the chapel of Saint Joseph was officially opened.

In 1890 Gaudí drew up the first full plan of the Sagrada Família and this was possibly the year in which a large anonymous donation gave a boost to the temple’s construction. Work on the Nativity Façade began in 1892. Two years later the neo-gothic apse was completed in which the spikes of the pinnacles and the amphibian and reptile gargoyles underlined the naturalist tendency of the decoration that the Nativity Façade would have.

For the great many figures on this Façade, Gaudí used a system of live moulding. He chose the model that best characterised the figure represented, placed them between mirrors and photographed them to obtain images from different viewpoints. After deciding on the most suitable posture, they were then moulded in plaster.

In 1910, in the hall of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts de Paris, a model of the Nativity Façade was exhibited, polychromed by Jujol, along with a model of the bell tower culminating points. In the same year, Gaudí applied the new structural discoveries that he had rehearsed on the church of the Güell Industrial Village on the temple’s naves. With these he overcame the limitations of Gothic, letting the weight of the building rest upon ramified and inclining columns, thus doing away with buttresses and enabling the opening up of large windows on the side walls. Gaudí took a special interest in the temple’s acoustic conditions: the nave vaulting works as a diffusing element of both light and sound, and the openings of the bell towers are fitted with a *tornavoz*, a device for returning sound, leaning masonry plaques that protect from the rain



Photograph of the crypt in construction published in 1886.

and direct the sound of the bells towards the street.

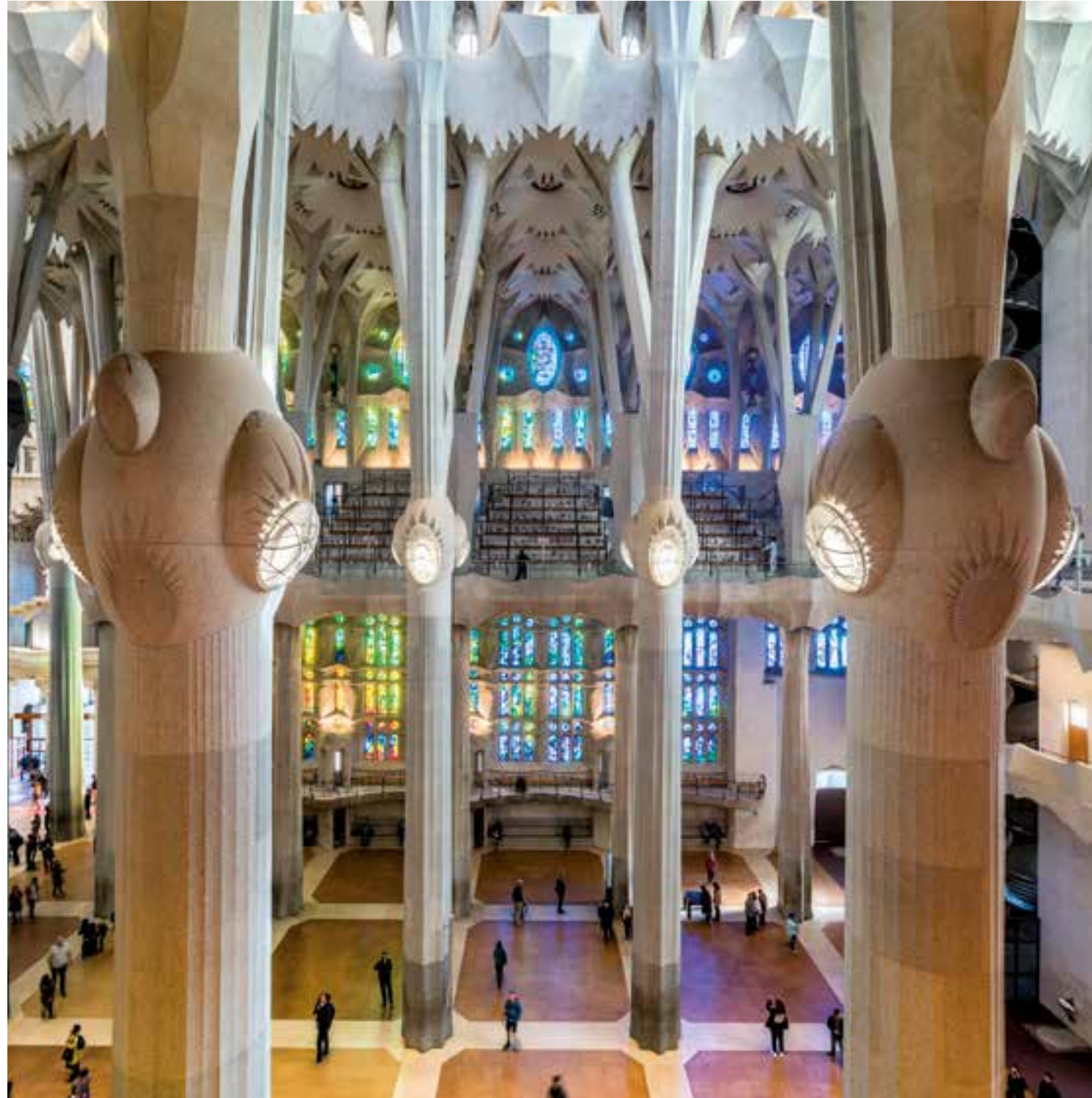
In 1911 Gaudí caught brucellosis and during his convalescence worked on the project for the Passion Façade. “I am prepared to sacrifice the building itself, to break vaulting and cut columns in order to get across the idea of how cruel sacrifice can be”, he said. After the illness, the architect accepted no other commissions. In 1923 he found the definitive solution for the naves and roofing in 1:10 and 1:25 scale plaster models. The models that Gaudí left behind, partly destroyed during the Civil War, have enabled the works to be continued.

On the 30th of November 1925, the first bell tower of the Nativity Façade was completed, in dedication to Saint Barnabus. Gaudí stated his joy on seeing, “how that lance joined heaven and earth”. On the 7th of June 1926, while on his way to the church of Sant Felip Neri, Antoni Gaudí was run over by a tram. He died three days after the accident and was buried in the crypt of the temple that he had devoted a great part of his life to. Gaudí’s entire architectural career is encapsulated in the Sagrada

Família, where he applied all the experience he had gained from his previous work. The initial neo-gothic style of the apse and the crypt, and the naturalism of the portals on the Nativity Façade evolved into the structural forms, based on controlled geometry and used in the temple’s towers and naves. The sections show the different projects planned for the interior naves of the Sagrada Família. In the final solution of leaning, tree-like columns and vaulting that dispersed the light and sound, Gaudí achieved the synthesis of structure and form based on nature.

Current state of the works with the Nativity Façade in the centre.





The choirs are placed like tribunes over the side naves. On their railings are scores of liturgical hymns for all the year.



Infographic reconstruction of the appearance the temple will have once the works are completed.

1900-1902 Stained glass in the chapel of Vallgorguina

In the district of Vallgorguina, for the chapel of one of the farm-houses there, specifically Can Pujades, Antoni Gaudí designed two stained-glass windows that were produced in the prestigious Amigó workshops in Barcelona.

The stained-glass window of the Archangel Michael, measuring 75 × 24.5 cm, was placed in a side window of the chapel. The second and more spectacular, called the "Rossetó", the rose window, was in the oculus of the façade and measures 90 cm in diameter.

The central motif of this stained-glass window is the Divine Providence, an eye placed in an open hand, the hand that guides and the eye that sees all. Three circles, which form a triangle alluding to the Holy Family, surround the symbol of the Divine Providence. In the circle on the upper vertex appears

the anagram of Jesus, while on the two lower vertexes are represented the anagrams of Mary (left) and Joseph (right).

The Divine Providence would appear later on, to be exact in the temple of the Sagrada Família, in the Faith Doorway of the Nativity Façade.

These stained-glass windows have today been restored and are on show in the National Museum of Art of Catalonia, in Barcelona.



1902 Entrance to the Miralles Estate

Ermenegild Miralles was a printer, framer and manufacturer of papier mâché tiles with his own patent. Gaudí had used these floor tiles in the *fumoir* of Casa Vicens and that same year would use them in the decoration of the Cafè Torino.

Miralles, who owned an estate in Sarrià –very close to that of Eusebi Güell and in which Gaudí had produced the pavilions and famous Dragon gate–, commissioned the architect with the construction of the enclosure wall and the door of the entrance to the estate.

Remaining today of Gaudí's work are the door and short section of the wall. This has an undulating crowning and the body of the wall is also undulating vertically, which increases the sensation of dynamism and movement even more.

The door is double, with an entrance for carriages and another

smaller one for pedestrians. The larger one has an unusual form of a lobulated arch and both are protected by a porch with small iron beams and fibre-cement material in the form of turtle shells. At the top of the door Gaudí placed a beautiful three-dimensional cross of cast iron, in undulating forms and of four arms.



1902 Cafè Torino

At the junction of Passeig de Gràcia and Gran Via, Flaminio Mezzalana, head of the Martini & Rossi vermouth in Spain, set up this establishment to publicise the drink in Barcelona.

For the decoration of the venue –which won the prize for the best establishment of the year awarded by Barcelona City Council– Mezzalana was able to count on the cream of the artists of the time: Ricard Capmany, Pere Falqués, Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Eusebi Arnau, Modest Urgell and, naturally, Antoni Gaudí.

The commission that Gaudí received –it is highly possible that Mezzalana was aware of the architect's early works, especially Casa Vicens– was the decoration of the Arab Salon of the Cafè Torino. Gaudí designed the wooden step and some pressed and varnished

card tiles that were used to cover the walls and ceiling.

Unfortunately, the Cafè Torino, a magnificent example of the Modernist splendour of the Barcelona of the time, disappeared when in the early 1930s the building that housed it was demolished.



1904 Sala Mercè

In 1904, in La Rambla, very close to Plaça Catalunya, one of the first cinema theatres in Barcelona was opened. It was the Sala Mercè, a venue for shows of a singular nature, created by the painter Lluís Graner.

Gaudí designed the show hall with a decoration that imitated a cave, incandescence lanterns between coloured tulles and a floor that sloped down to the stage for better spectator visibility.

After the opening of the cinema theatre some grottoes were opened, with stalactites and stalagmites that imitated the caves of the Drac and which Gaudí discovered during his stay in Mallorca for the reform work on the Cathedral. These grottoes showed dioramas that changed periodically and which amazed the children and amused the grown-ups too.

In 1913, due to the economic difficulties that Graner was experiencing, the Sala Mercè finally closed.

