

A MANSION IN THE OLD QUARTER

Palau Güell (1886-1889) is a mansion built in the historical quarter, in the Raval neighbourhood. The Eixample district was fully under construction at the time, but the Rambla still retained its lordly character as a street, with grand residences such as the Palau Moja, owned by the López family (Eusebi Güell's wife family). Güell had inherited from his father two properties on the Rambla, where the family had lived on the main, first floor. Eusebi Güell and his wife moved to that family residence because, due to disputes with their neighbours, they had had to leave the Count of Fonollar's house in Carrer de Portaferrissa, on the other side of the Rambla, where they had lived since they married.

Güell bought up several properties on Carrer Nou de la Rambla, the first street in the Raval district to be opened following a modern course, although, unlike the streets in the new Eixample district, it was narrow and poorly lit. Güell wanted to link his new mansion with the family residence on the Rambla, via the inner courtyard of the block. He also bought further properties on the same block, on the street running parallel to the Rambla and perpendicular to Nou de la Rambla, in order to be able to extend his mansion.

Antoni Gaudí built a mansion that met the Güells' family and social needs, making masterly use of the limited available space. He arranged the rooms around a central area, designed in the manner of the courtyards of the large Barcelona stately houses of the mediaeval period, topping it with a large dome.



THREE BLOCKS OF FLATS IN THE CENTRAL EIXAMPLE

Casa Calvet (1898-1899) — a newly constructed building on an empty site —, **Casa Batlló** (1904-1906) — a refurbishment of a block of flats — and **Casa Milà** (1906-1912) — built where there had formerly been a family house surrounded by a garden — were all three in response to the type of building erected between party walls, with commercial establishments on the ground floor, a large flat for the owners' residence on the first floor, and flats rented out on the upper floors. The three buildings were located in the central part of the Eixample district (designed by Ildefons Cerdà), whose built-up area extended rapidly from 1860.

The central Eixample had been the first area occupied by well-to-do families who had left the old quarter once its walls had been knocked down in order to build small mansions with gardens erected alongside blocks of flats of more modest quality. From the last decade of the 19th century onwards, the area became consolidated as a bourgeois residential zone and as a commercial and business area. The rapidly rising value of this new urban centre made it worthwhile to demolish the smaller mansions built only a few years earlier in order to build blocks of flats that achieved higher financial returns on the land. It also led to a process of improvement and embellishment of the blocks of flats that had already been built: All of that coincided with the upsurge of the modernist idiom, and this was the code used by many architects to lend form to that reclassification of the new commercial and bourgeois centre.

The mismatches that arose in all three cases between Gaudí's proposals and the municipal ordinances reflected the difficulties encountered with the typology of party-wall buildings in the Eixample area in formalising an eye-catching and representative architecture, such as the one Gaudí aspired to build and that which the promoters required of their architects.



THE CITY, MODERNISME AND GAUDÍ

A PERIPHERAL MODERNISME?

Why did there arise in Barcelona that *modernisme* or Catalan Art Nouveau architecture that is not to be found in the great European cities? In Paris, despite the great contribution from Guimard, it is a minority phenomenon. *Modernisme* or Art Nouveau is nonetheless to be found in Brussels, Nancy, Glasgow, Riga, Helsinki, Bad Nauheim, Ljubljana, Budapest and Vienna, cities in which there was a rising bourgeoisie seeking to assert itself in the face of its respective states or empires.

Those cities, far-removed from what were then seen as the great decision-making nuclei of the continent — Paris, London and Berlin — had recourse to architecture to project a new and different image. But Barcelona went further, and its architecture — particularly that of Antoni Gaudí, but also that of Lluís Domènech i Montaner, Josep M. Puig i Cadafalch and so many others — showed extreme singularity in its wish to create a locally rooted and yet also universal language. With the intention of making itself the capital of the new Catalonia, Barcelona could not renounce making its architecture into a mark of identity.

That desire to create an urban representation of *modernisme* architecture nonetheless came up against the difficulties of individualising the façades found in the party-wall construction typology of the Eixample, one so well adapted to the urban image of Paris and of other great capitals. Whence the diatribes of some architects and owners against the geometry of the Eixample. Despite this, the architects and owners did enable Barcelona to become an extravagant place that acquired fame from the periphery of Europe for its singular urban image, far-removed from the usual stereotype of the great European cities.

ARCHITECTURE AND MUNICIPAL POLICY

In 1891, Barcelona City Council passed new municipal ordinances that introduced notable improvements in sanitary matters, though at the same time allowed greater urban density by permitting taller and deeper buildings. The new ordinances also accorded greater protagonism to façades, by authorising the construction of galleries, templets and all kinds of ornamental add-ons. Initially, the Eixample district had been built in compliance with the strict regulations that applied to the old city, imposing regularity of façades, marking out cornice lines and the number of balconies in a manner akin to the regulations of other European cities. The new ordinances opened the doors to creativity in composition and offered owners a chance to make their buildings stand out.

THE MODERNITY OF MODERNISME

It is often stated nowadays that *Modernisme* is the local Catalan version of international Art Nouveau; the Catalan architects of the time did not see it that way, however. They were aware — and Puig i Cadafalch wrote as much in 1904 — that they were creating a new, modern, Catalan architecture that was at once cosmopolitan and autochthonous, as corresponded to an emerging Catalonia and Catalonia. Historiography has taken over the concept of *Modernisme* which, in its origins applied only to literature and plastic arts, making it into a concept that defined an epoch.

ARCHITECTURE AND ORNAMENTATION

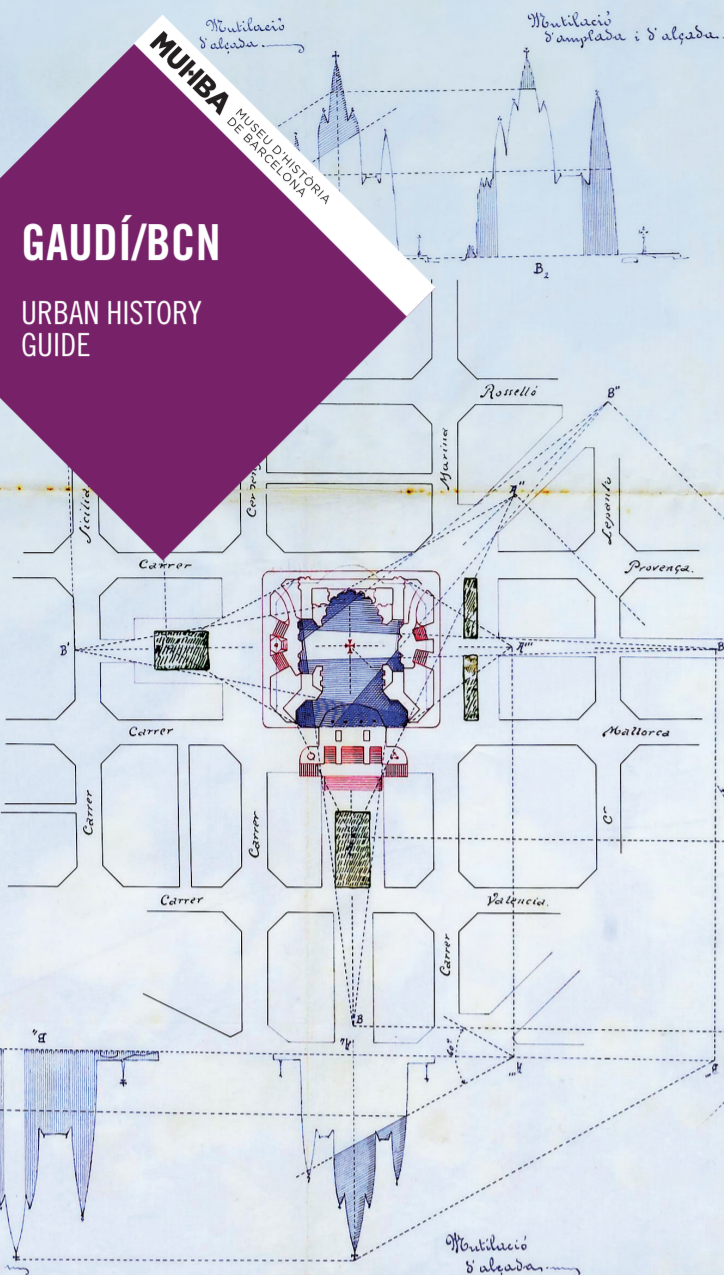
For the architectural treatise writers from the 18th century onwards, ornamentation was what lent character to architecture, the feature that helped to render its functionality and symbolic objectives. The ornamentation had to be integrated into the building's constructional system. Those principles remained unalterable among the *modernisme* architects. What they did at the time was simply to alter the formal codes: historical models were left to one side in order to recombine them freely, incorporating nature as a source of inspiration. Gaudí took the sense of identity between architecture and ornamentation further than any other architect of the time. For Gaudí, architecture succeeded in achieving its symbolic value and capacity to express ideas through a painstaking handling of ornamentation.

GAUDÍ'S TWO CATHEDRALS

In the years when he was embarking on his professional career, Gaudí took up a position with the architect Joan Martorell. In 1882, Martorell took part in an invitation to tender for a project of refurbishment of the façade of Barcelona cathedral, which Gaudí helped to draw. Under the influence of Victorian neo-Gothic architecture, Martorell and his young assistant architects opted for a "modern Gothic", in a creative interpretation that combined the constructional functionality of Gothic with considerable freedom of composition. A year later, also through Martorell, Gaudí was commissioned to continue with the building work on the Sagrada Família church, and his structural and symbolic research work into Gothic architecture led him to curious and original solutions.

GAUDÍ/BCN

URBAN HISTORY GUIDE



MUHBA

Ajuntament de Barcelona



abertix

SIEMENS

el Periódico

Museu d'Història de Barcelona
Plaça del Rei, s/n
08002 Barcelona

Information and reservations
Tel. 93 256 21 22
reservesmuhba@bcn.cat

barcelona.cat/museuhistoria
facebook.com/barcelonacultura
twitter.com/bncultura

MUHBA URBAN HISTORY GUIDES:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. BARCHINO/BCN | 15. REREGUARDA/BCN |
| 2. GAUDI/BCN | 16. ROMANESQUE 11th-13th /BCN |
| 3. DIAGONAL/BCN | 17. CALL/BCN |
| 4. PARCS/BCN | 18. BALCONADA/BCN |
| 5. GOTHIC/BCN | 19. INDIANS 1835-1888/BCN |
| 6. WATER/BCN | 20. MACOSA/BCN |
| 7. BARRAQUES/BCN | 21. II GUERRA MUNDIAL 1939-1945/BCN |
| 8. DEFENSA 1936-39 / BCN | 22. LA MAQUINISTA / BCN |
| 9. ORIENT/BCN | 23. PUIG I CADAFALCH / BCN |
| 10. SEAT 1950-65 / BCN | 24. SEXUALITAT S.XX/BCN |
| 11. POBLENOU/BCN | 25. AIGUA KM ZERO / BCN |
| 12. TEATRES/BCN | 26. AUTOMOBILE/BCN |
| 13. COOPERATIVES 1842-1939/BCN | 27. FABRA I COATS / BCN |
| 14. INDIANES 1736-1847 / BCN | |

©MUHBA 2014 2nd edition: December 2019

AUTHORS: Mar Leniz
Text: "The City, *Modernisme* and Gaudí", Mireia Freixa

PHOTOGRAPHY: Anna Oswaldal Cruz; AFB (Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona); Arxiu Fotogràfic de l'Institut Municipal de Museus de Reus; AMCB (Arxiu Municipal Contemporani de Barcelona); Arxiu Obra Social Caixa Catalunya; Arxiu Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família; Biblioteca de Catalunya; Ernest Boix Collection; Cercle Cartòfil de Catalunya; Fototeca.cat; Arxiu Mas. Fundació Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic; Reial Catedral Gaudí; Cartography property of Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (www.icc.cat)

COORDINATION: Elisenda Curià and Anna Shelly

DESIGN: Montserrat Cucurella-Jorba

LAYOUT: Andrea Manenti

TRANSLATION: Anàloga Traducciones

THE NEW CATHEDRAL TO THE EAST OF THE EIXAMPLE

The **expiatory church of La Sagrada Família** (1883-1926) represents the creation of a new cathedral in the new metropolitan city. The block acquired in order to build the church pertained to the part of the Eixample lying within the municipal district of Sant Martí de Provençals, which did not become part of Barcelona until 1897. The chosen site was at that time on the periphery of the expanding metropolis, and the new church arose in the midst of modest dwellings, shops, factories and workshops. But its proximity to the future Plaça de les Glòries revealed a wish to locate the new cathedral close to the zone which according to Cerdà's forecasts was to become in the more distant future the most central point in Barcelona.

Gaudí inherited a project that had already been started, and he came up against the difficulty of making his proposal fit into a square block site in the Eixample. With a view to making the utmost use of the space, he came up with a design for the cloister to be arranged around the church. The church was to be laid out in a five-nave basilica ground plan with a three-nave cross-vault. In order to reach the level of the church, which stands above street level, Gaudí planned a monumental flight of steps opposite the Glory façade, which meant that the adjacent block on the other side of Carrer Mallorca had to be encroached upon.

Before the approval of the 1917 Connections Plan, which took up some of the proposals of the plan that won the tender called by the City Council in 1903, by Léon Jaussely, Gaudí drew up several plans for the church surrounds, firstly at the request of Jaussely himself, and later that of the City Council. In those plans he proposed that a star-shaped free zone be left free around the church in order to provide new angles for perspective views. For that reason he raised various reasoned objections to the solutions proposed by the City Council, such as the one shown on the cover of this urban history guide.



GAUDÍ / BCN

CASA MILÀ

(1906-1912)
Passeig de Gràcia, 92

Pere Milà i Camps, a businessman and politician married to a wealthy widow, **Roser Segimon i Artells**, wanted to have a singular house. He demolished the house with surrounding garden that his wife owned on Passeig de Gràcia in order to build a block of flats, and in order to do so he chose Antoni Gaudí, the architect who had refurbished the house of his friend Josep Batlló.



Pere Milà i Camps / Roser Segimon i Artells

Gaudí constructed a building that did not comply with the municipal ordinances. The scaffolding occupied the entire pavement of the street, the building exceeded the buildable plan outline and far surpassed the maximum permitted height. In the end, however, the Eixample Committee allowed the building to be completed, arguing that it was monumental in character and therefore did not have to comply with the regulations.



Passeig de Gràcia, at its crossing with Carrer de Provença, 1927

Casa Milà was known popularly as "La Pedrera" (the quarry). The encounter between the geometrical rationality of Cerdà's Eixample and the undulating design of Gaudí's work have made the Casa Milà one of the jewels of architecture. But its irregular appearance was not received with unanimous approval at the time, and it was the target of many caricatures. A failure to understand the building, and the brusque ending of relations between Gaudí and the Milà family, owing to various disagreements, could have been why the Barcelona bourgeoisie did not commission any more buildings from Gaudí.

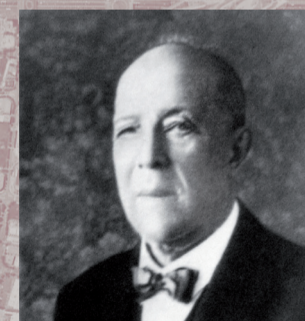


Picador Jest / U'squiper de la Torre, 1912

CASA BATLLÓ

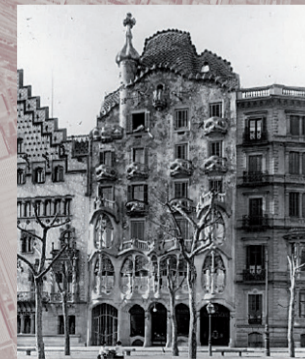
(1904-1906)
Passeig de Gràcia, 43

Josep Batlló i Casanovas, a textiles industrialist, decided to undertake an overall refurbishment of the block of flats he had on Passeig de Gràcia. Batlló wanted his house to look different from the others, and for that reason he chose the architect of the Güells, the architect who a few years earlier had won the prize for the best building of the year, awarded by Barcelona City Council to Casa Calvet.



Josep Batlló i Casanovas

Gaudí made substantial changes to the exterior appearance of the house and reorganised the interior spaces. And he added two storeys, in a decision that was called into question because it exceeded the limits laid down in the municipal ordinances. On the other hand, though, he built a terrace on the top left side of the building in order to level the Casa Batlló with the neighbouring Casa Amatller, by Puig i Cadafalch, thus preventing his building leaving the party wall exposed.



Casa Batlló, 1910 / © Arxiu Mas

Casa Batlló caused a great impact in Barcelona and in 1906 was selected by the City Council as one of the city's finest buildings. With Casa Amatller (Josep Puig i Cadafalch, 1898) and Casa Lleó Morera (Lluís Domènech i Montaner, 1903) it forms part of what came to be known as the "Block of Discord", for the same block of houses displayed three formal solutions of different aesthetic resolution.



"Block of Discord", 1910-1920



© Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona

PAVILIONS OF THE GÜELL ESTATE

(1884-1887)
Avinguda de Pedralbes, 7



© Arxiu Mas

ENCLOSURE OF THE MIRALLES PROPERTY

(1902)
Passeig de Manuel Girona, 55-61



© Arxiu Mas

SCHOOL OF THE TERESIAN ORDER

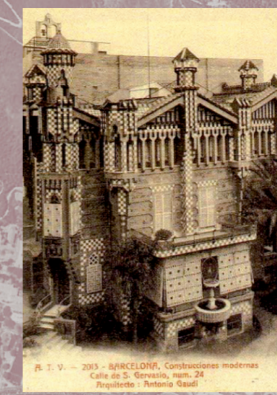
(1888-1889)
Carrer de Ganduxer, 85



© Arxiu Mas

TORRE BELLESGUARD

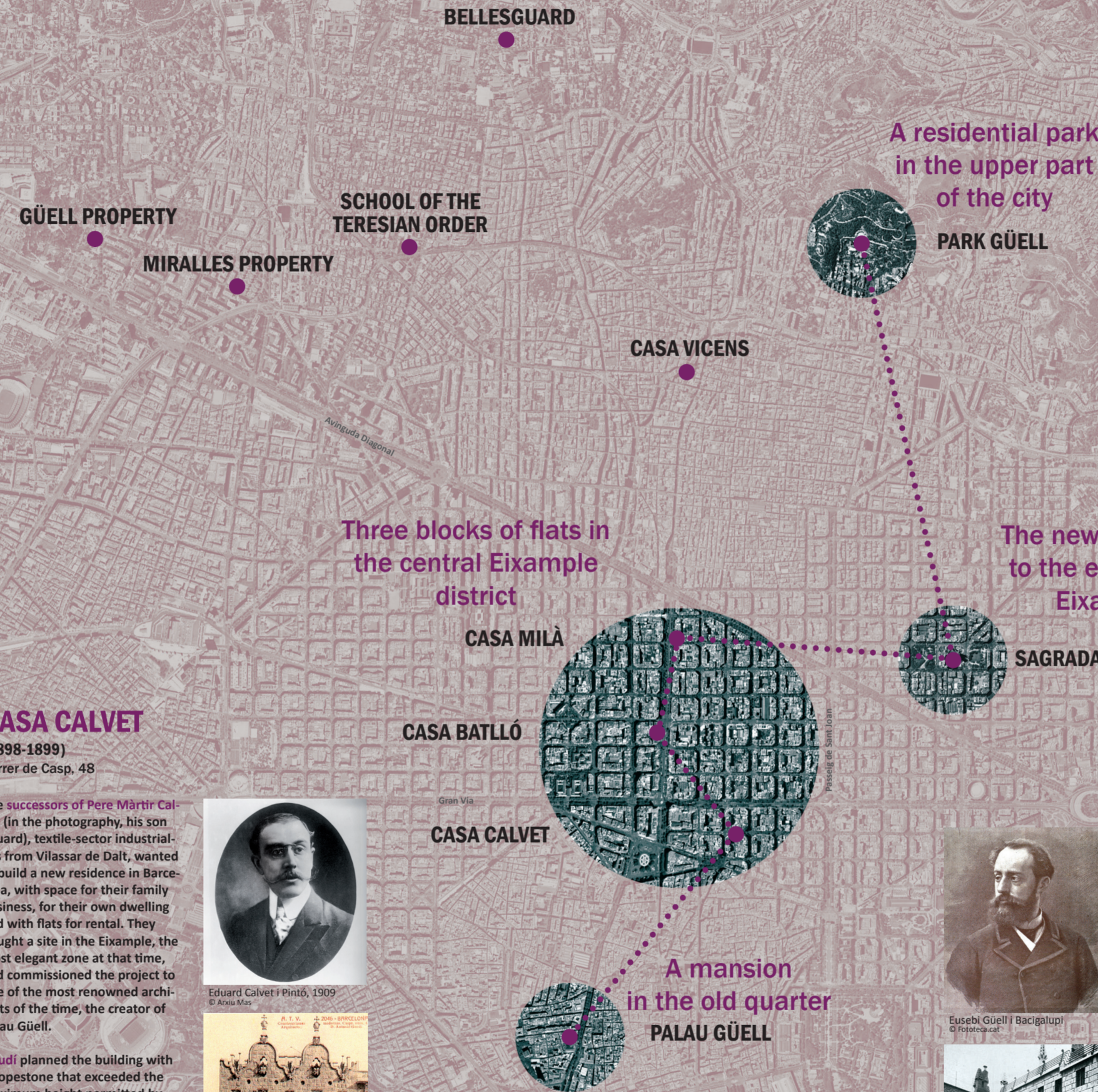
(1900-1909)
Carrer de Bellesguard, 16-20



© Ernest Boix Collection, Cercle Cartòfil de Catalunya

CASA VICENS

(1883-1888)
Carrer de les Carolines, 18



Three blocks of flats in the central Eixample district

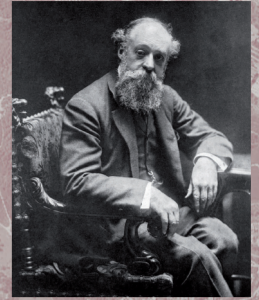
A residential park in the upper part of the city

The new cathedral to the east of the Eixample

A mansion in the old quarter

PARK GÜELL

(1900-1914)
Carrer d'Olot, s/n



Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi

Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi, a textiles industrialist, patron of the arts and politician, was more than 50 years of age when he commissioned Antoni Gaudí for the Park Güell project. Güell wanted to create a private residential estate, with common services and security, for well-to-do families who could live surrounded by gardens in a more healthy setting that in the centre of the city, but without losing sight of their businesses.



Partial view of Park Güell, 1905



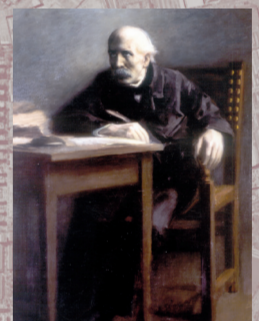
Entrance to Park Güell, 1905

Gaudí developed the site. He kept the existing vegetation and planted Mediterranean species. He created systems for collecting and storing water in order to combat erosion and encourage plant regeneration. He designed the common services and the entire network of paths, with viaducts, flights of steps and walls that spanned the topography and that could be left covered by the vegetation.

But the Park Güell was a failure as a residential condominium project. Only two of the planned sixty houses were built, and one of those was the show home for the estate. The reluctance of the Barcelona bourgeoisie to move to that poorly connected zone, and the restrictive clauses concerning utilisation and building on the plots were some of the possible reasons for that failure. The park was purchased by the City Council and opened to the public in 1926.

THE EXPIATORY CHURCH OF LA SAGRADA FAMÍLIA

(1883-1926)
Plaça de la Sagrada Família, s/n



Josep Maria Bocabella i Verdaguer

Josep Maria Bocabella i Verdaguer, a bookshop proprietor who had founded the *Associació Espiritual de Devots de Sant Josep* in 1866, wanted to build a church dedicated to the Holy Family. His association bought up an entire block on the right-hand side of the Eixample, and the architect Francesc de Paula del Villar drew up the plan for the church following neo-Gothic models, frequently used at the time for new churches. However, due to disagreements with the promoters, Villar abandoned the works when only the crypt had been started.

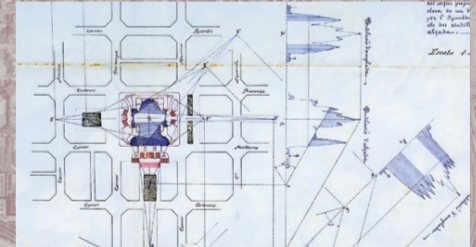
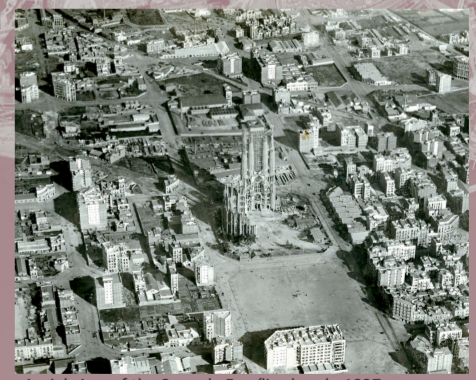


Chart of arguments against the City Council plans, 1916

Gaudí accepted the commission to continue the building work, though he entirely transformed Villar's plan. He planned on a monumental scale that encroached into the block adjoining that of the Sagrada Família, on the other side of Carrer de Mallorca, and he drew up a whole series of arguments against the plans of the City Council in order to achieve perspective views of the church. But the architect died in 1926, leaving his great work unfinished.



Aerial view of the Sagrada Família church, 1927

The Sagrada Família is still under construction today, despite controversy over whether the project is in line with Gaudí's plans and even over whether it was in any case appropriate to continue with a work such as this. On 7 November 2010, once the interior had been completed, Pope Benedict XVI consecrated the church as a minor basilica. The planning proposals that Gaudí had drawn up for the zones around the church were not implemented, though a diagonally running road was built from Hospital de Sant Pau to the Sagrada Família, the road named Avinguda de Gaudí, and two squares were built, facing the façades of the Birth and of the Passion.



© Real Catedral Gaudí

TEMPORARY SAGRADA FAMÍLIA SCHOOLS

(1909)
Plaça de la Sagrada Família, s/n

PALAU GÜELL

(1886-1889)
Carrer Nou de la Rambla, 3-5

Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi was about 40 years old when he commissioned Gaudí to build his mansion. Barcelona's well-to-do families tended to have their residences built in the Eixample district, but Güell preferred to have his built on Nou de la Rambla, in the old quarter, so that the mansion would be linked to other Güell properties on the Rambla.



Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi

Gaudí planned a building with few openings, based around a central space covered by a dome, with the whole detached from the surrounding zone, for the mansion faced an establishment of ill repute, the Edèn Concert. The main floor of the mansion connected via the interior courtyard of the block, and through a passageway, with one of the buildings the Güells owned on the Rambla.



Rear facade of Palau Güell

The Palau Güell was inaugurated in 1888, despite the fact that it was not entirely finished, for it was to be used as an area for official receptions on the occasion of the 1888 Universal Exposition. The building created a big impression in the city. The subsequent decline of the urban area around the mansion and the very tense political and social situation prompted Güell to move, around 1907, to his estate in the upper part of the city, the Park Güell.



Palau Güell, 1910 / © Ernest Boix Collection, Cercle Cartòfil de Catalunya

CASA CALVET

(1898-1899)
Carrer de Casp, 48

The successors of Pere Martí Calvet (in the photograph, his son Eduard), textile-sector industrialists from Vilassar de Dalt, wanted to build a new residence in Barcelona, with space for their family business, for their own dwelling and with flats for rental. They bought a site in the Eixample, the most elegant zone at that time, and commissioned the project to one of the most renowned architects of the time, the creator of Palau Güell.



Eduard Calvet i Pinyol, 1909

Gaudí planned the building with a copestone that exceeded the maximum height permitted by the municipal ordinances. The plans presented to the City Council were sent back, but Gaudí refused to alter the plan, limiting himself instead to drawing a horizontal line at the maximum permitted height and thus leaving the façade sharply truncated. Eduard Calvet undertook the necessary formalities, and finally the project was completed as Gaudí had envisaged.



Casa Calvet / © Ernest Boix Collection, Cercle Cartòfil de Catalunya

And in 1900, Casa Calvet received an award from Barcelona City Council for the best city building completed in 1899, in the first edition of the Urban Buildings Competition. The prize for the competition consisted in a bronze plaque that was attached to the façade of the award-winning building, and a diploma that was presented to the project architect.



Diploma, 1900