

# The Architecture of Antoni Gaudí

Fall Semester 2019 (Langley Hall, room A224)

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## Lecture 2: Trencadís

### Partis Pris:

**Confidence:** Introduced to Eusebi Güell in 1878, commissioned in 1884, thereby leaves La Obrera Mataronense cooperative. Named architect for Sagrada Familia in 1883, re-designing original architect's plans in 1885, as Dragon Gate is completed.

**'seeing how it will turn out':** Gaudí applies the regional artistic temperament of beginning with only a vague notion of what is going to be produced and an absolute confidence in one's own abilities, when he edits his buildings on the construction site, tearing down walls and entire rooms, as if they are merely a plaster sculpture or cardboard maquette.

**Liturgical influences:** Bishop Grau mentors Gaudí on the significance of the liturgy in the Catholic Mass, undergoing a conservative restoration in the 19th century, transforming Gaudí's religious practices and informing his architecture.

**Sculptural figures:** Gaudí studies Becerra's Astorga Cathedral marble figures while working on Episcopal Palace in 1888, mimicking placement of figures for Sagrada Familia Nativity façade begun in 1892, and figurative ventilators of Palacio Güell.

**Elevated canopy:** Suspended articulated massing atop minimal supports, inspired by Gothic arches of the Poblet Monastery, developing from elevations of Casa Vicens and Palacio Güell, to the Sagrada Familia lighted canopy above a modest altar.

**Four-armed cross:** Viewed from all perspectives, unlike flat two-armed cross with a front and backside, dividing space into the sacred and profane, a three-dimensional cross unifies space into a singular sacred space, without a profane backside.

**Functional ornament:** Sagrada Familia altar backdrop decorated by functional elements: stained glass, columns, organ pipes.

**Trencadís mosaics:** Fracturing tiles, no longer perfect, makes visible the character of the lines and colors, brings tiles to life.

**Origin:** Limitations bring greater creativity, returning to Catalan traditions in brickwork, an inexpensive but versatile material. "Originality is to return to the origin, so that the original is precisely that which returns with new means to the simplicity of first solutions."

### **Palacio Güell (1885-1890)**

#### Leitmotifs:

Austere façade of Garraf marble, concealing treasures inside from the streets filled with disease, degeneration, poverty, thieves.

Dragon atop Catalan flag at entry, atop globe on roof spire and throughout interior - the garden spoils taken from his exploits.

Hand beaten copper sheets clad interior surfaces, homage to Gaudí's father, transforming flat sheets into dimensional forms.

Ironwork weaves through interiors like ivy, attaching to walls and columns, as was done on Gaudí's roll-top desk.

Mural paintings by Aleix Clapés turn corners, becoming dimensional in space, the art and architecture synthesized as one.

Central parabolic dome used as acoustical baffle, focusing music to the salon from pipe organ integrated within upper attic.

Mechanized innovations, interior doors opening in series by the first door, tied together by levers/arms in hinging/frames.

Sectional spaces arranged as Arab hammam, balcony for caliph to peer down unobserved, on his harem of heavenly delights.

Roof terrace chimneys and ventilator shafts decorated with waste remnants of construction: glass, marble, tile, lime kiln stone, redeemed, all things put to use as in nature, ornamenting a private place raised to the highest point – metaphoric heaven above the star filled sky dome, arching over the earthly soiled ground floor salons, with the underground bowels of beasts in stables.

### **Episcopal Palace of Astorga (1887-1893)**

#### Leitmotifs:

Pointed Gothic arches, weighted articulation atop short narrow columns.

Paired arched openings, accentuating a single column standing alone in open space.

Splayed triple arch portico entry flaring forward, first sign of sculptural plasticity, developing three-dimensional space.

### **St. Teresa convent (1888-1890)**

#### Leitmotifs:

Infused religious symbolism in ornamentation: insignias of Jesus Christ, sacred and bleeding hearts of Mary and St. Teresa.

Meditative space created with modest means in utilitarian hall, by single course brick columns and parabolic arches in series, modulating natural light from internal court between paired halls, supported by paired parabolic corbels in series below.



Proposed Elevation for Cathedral of Barcelona by Juan Martorell, drawn by Luis Doménech y Montaner, 1882.

Note the splayed pointed Gothic arch framing paired doors that create a single accentuated column isolated individually in space.