

DANI CORTIJO
AND ROCIO SIERRA CARBONELL



SECRET BARCELONA



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

THE FACE OF GAUDÍ

⑦

Gaudí in the guise of Saint Philip Neri

Church of Sant Felip Neri – Plaça de Sant Felip Neri, 5
93 317 3116

Saturday and the day before festivals: 8.15am–10.15am and 7.15pm–9.15pm

Sunday: 10am–2pm

Metro Catalunya



At the age of 50, the architect Gaudí, who never wanted to be photographed or to appear in newspapers or magazines, agreed to pose for some portraits. One of them is in the Rosary Chapel of the Sagrada Família.

Every day, Gaudí went to the church of Sant Felip Neri to chat with the priest Lluís Maria de Valls. During the summer of 1902, he decided to pose for his friend, the painter Joan Llimona, for two works that are still kept in the church, one on each side of the presbytery. In the event, the artist chose the features and face of Gaudí to represent Saint Philip Neri in these two paintings.

On the right, Saint Philip Neri with the face of Gaudí is explaining Christian doctrine to some children on Rome's Gianicolo (Janiculum) hill. On the left, the saint, still depicted as Gaudí, is celebrating the Eucharist, the sacrament during which a miracle had occurred and the saint had begun to levitate.

Gaudí apparently said that he supported these works as the Eucharistic sacrifice would save such a sinful city as Barcelona. The Baroque church of Sant Felip Neri was built between 1721 and 1752. Philip Neri, who was born in Florence on 22 July 1515 and died on 26 May 1595, founded the Congregation of the Oratory, which focused on youth, joy and music (for more on the saint, see *Secret Rome* in this series of guides).



GAUDÍ'S STREETLAMPS

(2)

Of the six lamps designed by Gaudí, only four remain

*Plaça Reial, s/n
Metro Drassanes*

*Pla de Palau, s/n
Metro Barceloneta*



© Canaan

The *fanals* (lamps) in Barcelona's Plaça Reial are quite amazing and worth a closer look. They were designed by the Modernist architect Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (1852–1926) as one of his first commissions in 1879. This was a month before he graduated as an architect and started work as a designer with Josep Fontserè, a Freemason like himself, which probably explains why he was given this commission.

Gaudí designed two different types of lamp, one with three and the other with six branches. Two of these lamps, with a stone base and bronze and wrought-iron posts, grace Plaça Reial. However, given their high price (3,500 pesetas at the time), Barcelona City Council wanted the others to be cheaper. Gaudí simplified the design so that each lamp would cost no more than 1,500 pesetas, but after that he no longer wanted to work for the council, despite its insistence on trying to appoint him as official architect. Minimalism had no place in his extravagant style.

The decoration of the upper section of the Plaça Reial streetlamps is particularly striking, featuring the Roman god Mercury with winged helmet and two snakes coiled around the centre post. These lamps were installed in September 1879.

The location of the lamps between the Masonic lodges of General Madoz and Ildefons Cerdà is an interesting detail, hinting at the fact that Gaudí was probably a Freemason.

In 1890 the three-branched lamps, also in pairs, were installed in front of the municipal buildings in Pla de Palau. Of Gaudí's six lamps, the two originally in Paseo Juan de Borbón in the Barceloneta neighbourhood are missing. Nobody knows where they are now. The official explanation is that they are 'lost'.



© Canaan

FRIENDS OF THE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION

④

Miniature trains

Estació de França (south entrance) – Carrer d'Ocata

93 310 5297 – aafb.org

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 6pm–9pm, Saturday 5pm–9.30pm

Metro Barceloneta



Founded in 1944, Barcelona's Friends of the Railway Association (Asociación de Amigos del Ferrocarril de Barcelona) is a dream come true for rail lovers. Located in the south wing of the França station, it occupies three vast rooms.

One holds the library and has specialized magazines, films, and over 4,000 volumes available to members. Collector's items are found in every available space: signals, telegraph machines, old posters, and hundreds of model trains, replicating both famous and little-known engines.

The second hall is open to members who want to run their model trains and feel like real train drivers. The tracks twist and intersect in such a way that the enthusiastic operators must be on their guard and employ some basic skills to avoid an accident in miniature. Finally, there is a conference hall where lectures and courses are held, and rail films and documentaries projected.

The most striking aspect of this room is the seating, both for conference participants and the general public, which comes from authentic rolling stock. The association, in collaboration with the Renfe/ADIF rail company and the Catalan Government Railways, organizes special outings to discover vintage and modern trains. The AAFCB also has its own collection of vintage trains, such as the Garrat 106 steam locomotive dating from 1926, the Berga 31 steam train from 1902 fitted with wooden carriages, and the Patxanga 304 electric train from 1926. During May, June, July, and August, trips on these trains are organized to nearby villages, where a stop is usually made for lunch, the idea being to recreate the ambience of an earlier age. The association can be visited without pre-booking if you are just passing through. If you wish to join and participate in their conferences, excursions, or become a model train driver, the inscription fee is €30 and the annual fee €98.

There is a similar organization in Paris, with premises located beneath the Gare de l'Est (see *Secret Paris*, in the same collection as this guide).

ANATOMY LECTURE HALL

④

Barcelona's secret masterpiece of neoclassical architecture

Real Academia de Medicina
Carrer del Carme, 47
93 317 1686
Wednesday, 10am–1pm
Metro Liceu



Designed by the surgeon Pere Virgili and built in 1760 by Ventura Rodríguez, the P. Gimbernat anatomy lecture hall of Barcelona's Royal Academy of Medicine and Surgery is a little-known masterpiece of neoclassical architecture.

This dark and gloomy place has an atmosphere that can be overwhelming, inviting silence and inspiring respect. The circular hall, while not very large, has a very high ceiling. In the centre stands a marble table equipped with a hole to drain away the blood of the bodies being dissected. Its proximity to the Santa Creu hospital of course made it easier to perform demonstrations on human corpses.

Notable among the operations carried out at the time (1770) was the spectacular separation of Siamese twin boys.

The benches where the students sat surrounded the dissection table. In the front rows were a dozen wooden armchairs reserved for the authorities.

A chandelier hangs from the ceiling and between the high windows are busts of a number of immortal figures from Barcelona's medical world, such as Ramón y Cajal, Servet, and Mata.

The building was initially home to the College of Surgery, then until 1904 served as the Faculty of Medicine. It subsequently became a training school and, since 1920, has belonged to the Royal Academy of Medicine. In 1951 it was listed as a historic and artistic monument of national interest.

Once a year, Catalan writers meet in the lecture hall to 'dissect' the Catalan language, discuss the changing vocabulary, the future of the language, and additions to the dictionary.

Visiting is very restricted, with public access on Wednesday mornings only. It is no use trying to get in at other times.

There is a similar hall in London – see *Secret London: An Unusual Guide*, in this collection of guidebooks.

GARDEN OF TORRE DE LAS AGUAS

15

An oasis in the city

Roger de Llúria, 56

November–March 10am–7pm; April–October 10am–9pm (approximate closing time depending on sunset)

Metro Girona

The gardens of Torre de las Aguas are a green oasis in the heart of the Eixample ('Extension') district. A wrought-iron gate, designed by Robert Llimós and decorated with undulating waves, welcomes visitors



© Jordi Domènech

into this relaxing place. The idea of setting such havens of peace amidst residential blocks originated with Ildefons Cerdà, the engineer who masterminded the Eixample expansion. In fact, the gardens of Torre de las Aguas are one of the few places that survived intact from his original plans. The magnificent and imposing tower formerly provided the neighbourhood with water, hence its name, and it is still a meeting point for local residents. Erected by architect Josep Oriol Mestres and engineer Antoni Darder in 1870, the tower presides over a small pool that is very popular with children in summer.



CASA FAJOL

22

A naturalist symbol specific to Modernist aesthetic

Carrer de Llançà, 20

Residential building, the lobby is open to the public.

Metro Espanya



© G Zarra

Popularly known as Casa de la Papallona (Butterfly House) on account of the butterfly-shaped mosaic at the top of the façade, Casa Fajol is a Modernist building commissioned by the owner, Salvio Fajol, and constructed by the architect Josep Graner between 1911 and 1929.

It comprises a ground floor and five upper storeys; there are three large windows on each of the upper floors, arranged symmetrically. The façade is characteristic of the more sober linear forms of the city's 19th-century architecture and, in accordance with Modernist aesthetic canons, has decorative elements inspired by vegetal motifs.

One of Graner's creative contributions was the building's fantastic crowning feature: a large-scale, semicircular bulging relief depicting a butterfly, covered in multicoloured (yellow, blue, green and white) ceramic mosaic, using a technique known as *trencadís*, or broken-tile mosaic.

The lobby is decorated with white/blue ceramic wainscoting imitating marble veining. The upper sections of the walls feature sgraffito work, and where they meet the ceiling there is a plaster frieze with embossed vegetal motifs framing consoles with mural paintings of Romantic inspiration.

The building stands at No. 20 Carrer de Llançà, opposite the old Las Arenas bullring, built in 1900, and next to the current Plaça de España. As such, until recently it could be seen from any part of the square, from Parc de l'Escorxador and a section of Gran Vía. However, since the 2009 conversion of Las Arenas into a shopping centre, with its adjoining modern hotel, you can only get a full view of the magnificent butterfly from Carrer de Llançà itself.

Beyond its unique quality as an architectural ornament, Graner's butterfly expresses the artistic sentiment that emerged at the turn of the 20th century: the splendour of beauty, the resurgence of life, based on the simplicity of the caterpillar and its metamorphosis. An animalistic and naturalistic symbolism that was typical of the Modernist aesthetic, with its 'internal gardens', present in both architecture and metalwork, painting and decorative elements.

JARDÍN DE JAUME VIÇENS I VIVES 13

Zoological sculpture garden

*Avinguda Diagonal, 629
Metro María Cristina*



Jardín Jaume Viçens i Vives must be the most unusual and least-known park in Barcelona. Right inside the entrance, visitors are confronted by a terrifying metal sculpture of a reindeer being devoured by wolves.

Venturing further into the gardens, other figures of animals emerge, including a family of boars walking in single file, a rather disconcerted-looking deer, and a headless gazelle.

Hardly anyone visits this park to contemplate the beauty of the sculptures, which almost seem to have wandered in by chance. They are made from a variety of materials – marble, plaster, bronze – without any common style or scale.

Over time, some of the animals have lost various bits and pieces and thus been turned into mutants or hybrids, quite moving to see. This little park hidden in a built-up area is just next to La Caixa savings bank.



GATEWAY TO THE MIRALLES RESIDENCE

An authentic and unknown work by Gaudí

Carrer de Manuel Girona, 55-57 – Metro Maria Cristina



Surrounded by modern buildings in the Sarrià district, an impressive arched entrance in genuinely Gaudí-like style seems to stick out like an architectural sore thumb.

And no, it isn't a Gaudí reproduction or a piece inspired by the master architect and installed in the middle of nowhere, but an actual authentic work by him. So what's it doing here?

At one time, the imposing gateway was the entrance to the residence of Hermenegild Miralles, the owner of a company making construction equipment. Miralles was a good friend of Eusebi Güell, the prolific and original architect's main patron, and a close collaboration developed between Miralles and Gaudí. The industrial facilities were used for some of the tests and experiments with materials that Gaudí carried out for far more well-known and popular works than this one.

Miralles originally commissioned Gaudí to design the entire building, but in the end the project went to Domènec Sugranyes, another of the architect's collaborators.

But what did get a quintessentially Gaudí seal was the gateway, which still stands today, along with the perimeter fence of which some sections have survived.

The lobed archway has one entrance for carriages and another for pedestrians, perhaps drawing on old Roman city gateways. A metallic structure like a fishing net is stretched over an awning made of fibre cement imitating the shell of a tortoise.

At the top of the archway you can see a three-dimensional cross, very much a symbol of Gaudí's architecture, which could be inspired by cypress tree cones once they have dried and opened up.

During renovation works in 2000, a life-size bronze statue of Antoni Gaudí was erected, the work of sculptor Joan Camps.

The old Miralles residence disappeared, and was replaced by modern buildings in the 1970s. Even so, the streets inside the complex to which Gaudí's gateway still serves as an entry point are wide, sunny and pedestrianized, with gardens including facilities aimed at children. Without doubt a great outing to enjoy Modernism far from the hubbub involved in visiting the rest of the master's infinitely more popular and better-known architectural works.

TOMB OF PERE VINTRÓ SAGRISTÀ ⑧

A hidden gem of Catalan Modernism

Cementerio de Sant Andreu

Carrer Garrofers, 35–47

cbsa.cat

Daily 8pm–6pm

Metro Lluçmajor, Fabra i Puig

Located in Section One of Sant Andreu cemetery, the tomb of the Barcelona landowner Pere Vintró Sagristà is a hidden gem of Catalan Modernism dating from 1902. Little known, this exceptional



work was executed by the architect Simó Cordoní.

The front part of the tomb features a spectacular figure from ancient Egypt, which appears to be keeping watch over the tomb, its arms open over a grille. The references to ancient Egypt are common in tombs due to the rich funerary culture of that civilisation. However, there are signs that in the original architecture this feature depicted a skull and scythe, common vanitas motifs. The tomb also boasts Christian iconography and inscriptions – the Cross at the back, the side with a message reading ‘Death takes everything away. Only Christ gives light’ and the Alpha and Omega symbols, along with the vegetal motifs (so characteristic of Modernism) in the stone relief and the grille over the opening to the hypogeum.

Pere Vintró Sagristà was a prominent Barcelona agrarian landowner, the scion of the agricultural dynasty started by Pere Vintró Vintró in the 18th century. His property included estates in the current districts of La Sagrera, El Clot, Camp de l’Arpa, el Guinardó (where he owned the famous Mas Vintró), Sant Martí and Sant Andreu, but it was in the latter two neighbourhoods that he constructed several residential buildings, even becoming mayor of Sant Andreu. Due to his links with that district, when Pere Vintró Sagristà died in 1902, his son Pere Vintró Mariné decided to lay him to rest there and thus, as was often the case for the city’s bourgeoisie, he commissioned a pantheon from the Modernist architect Simó Cordoní.

Although Cordoní’s most well-known works are in Camprodon and Granollers, where he was the municipal architect, his most prominent works in Barcelona are his two pantheons: that of Pere Vintró Sagristà and that of Dr Robert in Montjuïc cemetery.

There is a stone bench where visitors can watch over the deceased and contemplate this Modernist work.



DIPÒSIT DE LES AIGÜES

19

One of the best-kept architectural secrets in Barcelona

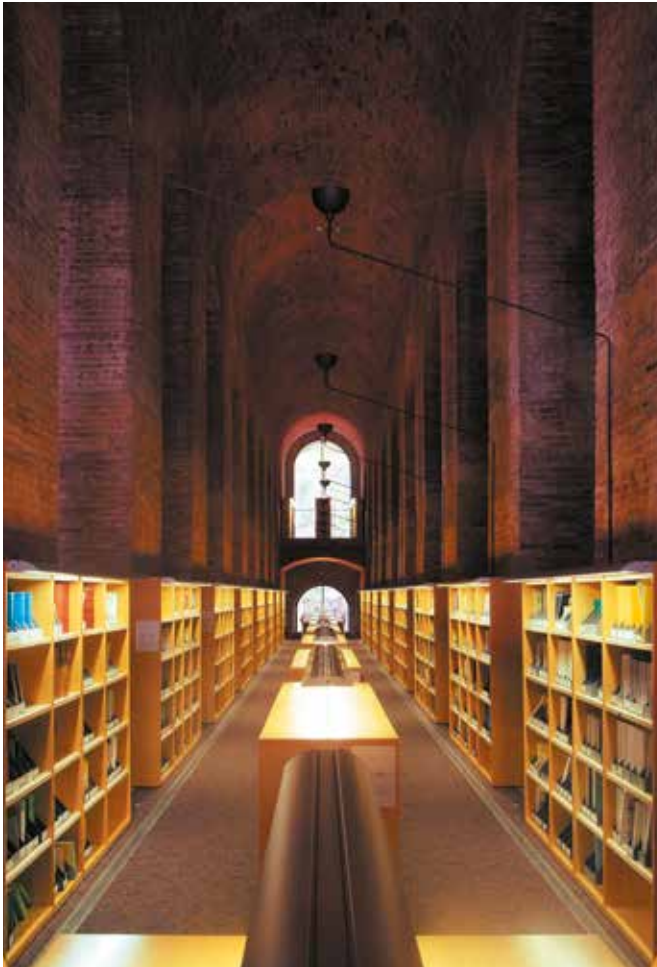
Pompeu Fabra University

Carrer de Ramón Trias Fargas, 39

93 542 1709

Monday–Friday 8am–1pm, Saturday 8am–2pm

Metro Ciutadella Vila Olímpica



The Dipòsit de les Aigües (Water Deposit) is one of the best-kept architectural secrets of the city. The building, inspired by the Mirabilis Roman baths, was constructed in 1880 by the architect Josep Fontserè. It was designed as a reservoir for water, hence the vaulted ceilings and brick walls resting on forty-eight pillars.

But over the years it has been used as a retirement home, a fire service warehouse, a film studio, an improvised hospital during the war, and finally, a university library.

In the 1970s, Pompeu Fabra University bought the building, thinking that it was an ideal opportunity to expand its facilities. Architects Lluís Clotet and Ignacio Paricio were commissioned to transform the space and adapt it to the needs of a library.

Apart from the effect of the million books stored here and the powerful architecture, the library has another distinctive feature.

Silence is of course the norm, but if you listen carefully, the roaring of lions and tigers can be heard through the huge windows. This is no illusion, the library is next door to Barcelona Zoo.



NEARBY

Tàpies' consultation room

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In Pompeu Fabra University, a few metres from the library, is a very strange 'contemplation room.' In this lay chapel, there are no saints or gods to be worshipped, but simply two canvases: *Díptic de la campana* and *Serp i plat*, both works by Antoni Tàpies. This room, designed by the Catalan sculptor and painter, contains some twenty chairs fixed to the wall. The original idea was to create a space where visitors could come to terms with themselves, call upon a personal deity, or just admire two brilliant works by Tàpies in absolute silence. If you would like to visit this meditative space, just ask permission at reception.

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SECRET

BARCELONA

The secrets of Gaudí and the Sagrada Família, a terrific tour of small trains hidden under the main station, a mysterious hand, a fascinating amphitheater of dissection, an unsuspected air-raid shelter, a kiss of death, a museum tucked away in the back of a shop, a magic talisman on a street sign, secret Mason symbols, the emblem of FC Barcelona in Santa María del Mar ...

During the day and night, Barcelona reveals its secrets only to locals and travelers seeking to get off the beaten path. To that end, it is key to know where to go.

An essential guide for those who think they know Barcelona well or for those looking to discover the hidden side of the city.

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