MATARÓ, IN THE LIGHT OF 5 STARS

Commemoration of the centenary of Antoni Gaudí's death

PRESENTATION

In the Year of Architecture (UIA International Congress of Architects, Barcelona as World Capital of Architecture and the centenary of the death of the architect Antoni Gaudí), the 16th edition of the Puig i Cadafalch 48-Hour Open joins in the celebrations with a new initiative to promote the city's architectural heritage.

Mataró is home to Gaudí's first two works – the latrines and the cotton-bleaching building at the La Obrera Mataronense Co-operative – which have become the starting point of his career.

Taking the Co-operative's bee – a symbol of work and industry – as its central theme, Mataró, in the Light of 5 Stars offers a tour of the city's five most important monuments, classified as cultural assets of national interest (BCIN).

Five buildings, five stars that shed new light on the world of architecture, in a journey through history and the various architectural movements.

Guided by their creators – architects and artists who have left a lasting mark in Catalonia – we will embark on a journey that will take us from the Roman past of the villa of Torre Llauder to the Baroque style of Antoni Viladomat in the Capella del Dolors. From the panopticon at Elias Rogent's design for La Preso to the Nau Gaudí as the central building of Antoni Gaudí's La Obrera Mataronense Co-operative, with a stop to admire the unique Modernist style of Josep Puig i Cadafalch's Casa Coll i Regàs.

A journey through the light of the Mediterranean, of candles, of the new city, of architectural expression and of the arts.

Five stars, five perspectives: heritage, economy and society in the development of Mataró.

ROUTE 1
IN CANDLELIGHT, IN THE LIGHT OF ART, IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW CITY

We begin the tour with 3 iconic sites that form the centrepiece of a heritage constellation encompassing various types: religious, residential and civil.

From the Baroque to Modernism, we will explore the relationships between architecture and spirituality, between architecture, craftsmanship and the applied arts, between form and function, and between buildings and urban facilities.

Light, colour, music, silence, materiality, emptiness and fullness as essential and defining components of spaces designed to meet different personal and collective needs.

Although small in size, these magnificent buildings – thanks to the work of the painter Antoni Viladomat and the architects Elias Rogent and Josep Puig i Cadafalch – illustrate different periods in the city's history and in the history of architecture and art in Catalonia.

FILES

1/ BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA. CAPELLA DELS DOLORS
1 Santa Maria Square

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ROUTE 1
IN CANDLELIGHT, IN THE LIGHT OF ART, IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW CITY

The church of Santa Maria de Mataró has a history stretching back more than a thousand years. Although the earliest documentary references date from 1008 and 1054, archaeological finds suggest the existence of a previous early Christian church, probably built on the foundations of the ancient Roman temple in Iluro.

The Santa Maria building was gradually extended over the centuries to keep pace with the city's growth. Until the 15th century, there was a small Romanesque church on the site, which was demolished to make way for a new Gothic church with three naves and a bell tower. However, its current appearance is entirely Baroque, as from 1675 onwards, and for almost a century, major alterations were carried out which led to the construction of a transept crowned by a dome and a single central nave, following the design of the Milanese architect Ercule Turelli.

Particularly noteworthy are the dimensions of the main nave, which is 65.5 metres long and 15.5 metres wide, as well as those of the transept, which is 52.5 metres long. The current decoration of the vaults is a later addition and was carried out in 1926 by Vilaró y Valls, of Barcelona, based on a design by Josep Pagès.

Santa Maria, one of the most important Baroque buildings in Catalonia, was designated a cultural asset of national interest (BCIN, by its initials in Catalan) in 1998.

Within the architectural complex, several heritage features of great value stand out, amongst which the early Christian tombstone Lauda (C. 5th), the bell-tower (C. 15th - 18th), the Capella de les Santes (C. 17th), the altarpiece of El Roser (C. 18th), the Capella del Sagrament (1889) and the monumental organ (1927). However, the most iconic and notable site is undoubtedly the El Conjunt dels Dolors.

Capella dels Dolors

The Capella dels Dolors (Our Lady of Sorrows) is one of the most exceptional and sumptuous examples of Catalan Baroque architecture. Begun before the War of the Spanish Succession, in 1698, and completed around 1726, it houses an extraordinary collection of paintings from the workshop of Antoni Viladomat i Manalt (1678–1755), regarded as the most prominent Catalan painter of the first half of the 18th century.

The complex, comprising the chapel, the sacristy, the choir, the crypt and the council chamber, was built by the Venerable Congregació de la Mare de Déu dels Dolors de Mataró (Congregation of Our Lady of Sorrows), founded in Mataró in 1693. Viladomat carried out a comprehensive decoration project there: he painted the oval panels of the altarpiece, those on the walls and those in the council chamber, the latter probably begun by the painter Joan Gallart.

In the chapel – a single-nave space with a three-bay vault and lunettes, of considerable size and remarkable spaciousness – the altarpiece dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of Mary and the image of the Virgin with the Recumbent Christ, by Joan Vila, stand out; they are situated at the very centre of the space, forming a small sanctuary.

The Stations of the Cross are depicted on the walls in ten oil paintings. Both the walls and the ceiling vaults are decorated in tempera using the trompe-l'oeil technique, which creates illusory effects of depth and fictional architecture.

The council chamber, regarded the most delicate part of the complex, is a small octagonal room in which the apostles and evangelists are depicted, accompanied by a host of angelic musicians and presided over by the painting of the Assumption and Crowning of the Virgin Mary.

The fusion of the arts, including the decorative arts, is one of the main characteristics of the Baroque period. Colour, light, architecture, the monumental scale of the spaces and the compositional dynamism are fully evident in the Conjunt dels Dolors, an exceptional work that exemplifies the Baroque style as a grand artistic setting whilst retaining the profound spiritual aura that surrounds it.

ANTONI VILADOMAT (Barcelona, 1678 - Barcelona, 1755)

Antoni Viladomat i Manalt is regarded as the finest Catalan painter of the first half of the 18th century.

Viladomat was exposed to the art world from a very young age, as his father used to collaborate with artists of the time on the creation of altarpieces. He was an apprentice in the studio of the painter Joan Baptista Perramon, with whom he worked until he qualified as a master at the age of 24. He also collaborated with the Italian Ferdinando Galli Bibiena, an artist at the court of Archduke Charles III in Barcelona, which enabled him to further his training and secure new commissions.

He became the Church's and the religious orders' favourite painter because of his serene and evocative style. On two occasions (1723 and 1739) he won his cases against the Barcelona Painters' Guild, as he opposed its guild-based and artisanal ethos. This helped to enhance his reputation and consolidate his workshop, which was frequented by numerous artists, painters and craftspeople. As he was free from the guild's restrictions, he also became the bourgeoisie's favourite painter.

Between 1722 and 1737, he carried out the decoration of the Capella dels Dolors and the adjoining council chamber in the Basilica de Santa Maria in Mataró, one of the most comprehensive examples of Baroque art in Catalonia, encompassing architecture, sculpture and painting, as well as the decorative carvings on the frames, the altarpiece, the side galleries and the chapel's choir.

2/ CASA COLL I REGÀS
55 Argentona Street

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ROUTE 1
IN CANDLELIGHT, IN THE LIGHT OF ART, IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW CITY

Casa Coll i Regàs (1897), designated a cultural asset of national interest by the Government of Catalonia (BCIN) in 2000, is a magnificent example of a period of prosperity and of truly innovative architecture.

The house was designed at the height of the Industrial Revolution, against a backdrop of far-reaching urban transformation in Mataró and at a time when the bourgeoisie was playing a leading role in the intense social movements and changes taking place. Catalonia is currently experiencing a period of significant economic development, thanks to the expansion of transport, the consolidation of factories and industry in general, and the textile sector in particular. This is a time of expansion, including in the fields of trade and finance, which are thriving in major cities such as Mataró, which is constantly growing and changing.

Two particularly significant facts come together in the city: on the one hand, Mataró is the centre of the knitwear industry; on the other, it is the birthplace of the man who would go on to become one of the key figures of Catalan Modernist architecture: Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956).

Puig i Cadafalch, aged just 30, designed a detached house on Argentona Street on commission from the textile entrepreneur Joaquim Coll i Regàs. Casa Coll i Regàs is the only Modernist house in Mataró, designed a few years before such iconic buildings as Casa Amatller (1900), Palau Macaya (1901) and Casa de les Punxes (1905).

The interior of the main building is an exceptional example of the appreciation for the applied arts in architecture: mosaics, paintings, sgraffito, wrought iron, stained-glass windows, woodwork and sculpture. These features have been preserved intact and in their original condition for over 125 years and coexist in harmony, order and balance in every room. The result is a series of bright, welcoming, elegant and spacious areas that captivate the visitor's gaze.

The wealth of materials and techniques is pure poetry, an artistic expression that exquisitely links nature with the business activities of the family behind the development. Throughout the house, we discover a rich variety of plant motifs, symbolising family growth, fertility, companionship, comfort, resilience, wisdom, good luck, prosperity and abundance.

The building, which has been owned by the Iluro Foundation since 2013, is progressing through the various stages of its refurbishment with the aim of eventually offering a complete tour of its 1,200 square metres, spread over four floors and a viewing tower.

Welcome to Casa Coll i Regàs!

JOSEP PUIG I CADAFALCH (Mataró, 1867 - Barcelona, 1956)

Josep Puig i Cadafalch was a Catalan architect, art historian, archaeologist and politician.

In 1889, he was awarded a doctorate in Physical and Mathematical Sciences, and in 1891 he completed his architectural studies at the Provincial School of Architecture in Barcelona.

In 1892, he began working as the town architect of Mataró, taking over from Emili Cabanyes; for this reason, his earliest works are to be found in Mataró. He remained in office until 1896. Living in Barcelona, he is the architect behind some of the most iconic buildings in the Eixample district, in a style that marks the transition from Modernism to the Catalan Noucentisme movement.

He entered politics as a councillor on Barcelona City Council (1901-1903), a member of the Spanish Parliament (1907-1910), a provincial deputy (1913-1924) and president of the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, a federation of Catalan provincial councils (1917-1924).

He was a specialist in art history, particularly Romanesque art, and one of the driving forces behind the excavations in Empúries, which led him to play a direct role in policies relating to the conservation and restoration of Catalonia's cultural heritage. In recognition of his professional achievements, several universities awarded him an honorary doctorate (the Sorbonne in Paris; Fribourg; Barcelona; Harvard; Toulouse).

Following the Spanish Civil War, between 1936 and 1942, he went into exile in France, where he settled in Northern Catalonia to study the Romanesque monuments in the area. On his return, the regime banned him from practising as an architect again. From then on, he devoted himself to organising literary evenings and semi-clandestine cultural events.

He died in Barcelona on 23 December 1956 and was buried on Christmas Day at the Capuchin cemetery in Mataró.

3/ LA PRESÓ
2 Muralla de la Presó Street

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ROUTE 1
IN CANDLELIGHT, IN THE LIGHT OF ART, IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW CITY

La Presó, the first panoptic-style building in Spain, is a 19th-century architectural gem which today combines heritage, history and contemporary art right in the heart of the city.

La Presó is one of the city's most iconic heritage buildings and a key and highly significant example in the history of contemporary prison architecture.

Situated at the junction of La Riera and the old city wall, it was built in the mid-19th century (1851-1863) to a design by the architect Elias Rogent, a key figure in the Catalan Renaissance movement. The building is the first example of the application of the panoptic model in Spain and is directly in line with the European prison reform movements of the time.

The concept of the panopticon was devised in 1787 by the British philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham. This is an architectural model based on a circular structure in which all the cells are arranged around a single central observation point, from which the movements of all the prisoners (pan) can be observed without being seen (opticon).

The building, which comprises a ground floor and a first floor, consists of two adjoining sections: one rectangular and the other semi-circular. The first block housed the facilities for prison security staff and administration. In the second, the various cells were arranged in a radial pattern and opened onto a central open-air courtyard, a characteristic feature of the panoptic system. Originally, it was designed to accommodate a maximum of fifty inmates, separated by gender, age and type of offence.

The main façade is a reinterpretation of the Catalan country house and 14th-century Italian palaces, in keeping with Elias Rogent's neo-medievalist ideals. In the rectangular building, the architect used stone blocks and designed a hipped roof. In the panoptic area, he used a brick vault and masonry walls, with brick pillars that delineate the different sections and define the rhythm of the façade. The gabled roofs of the cells define the building's upper profile.

Regarded as one of Mataró's most valuable heritage buildings, the importance and significance of La Presó lie not only in its architectural merit but also in its status as an exceptional subject and a testament to the turbulent social, political and cultural upheavals that shaped the history of Catalonia throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

On 23 October 2001, La Presó was designated a cultural asset of national interest (BCIN), the highest level of protection for Catalan cultural heritage.

In 1967, the building ceased to function as a prison. Since then, it has been used for a variety of purposes (detention centre, local police headquarters, headquarters for cultural organisations, etc.).

Since 2022, La Presó has been home to MAC Mataró Contemporary Art museum, and has established itself as a leading venue for the creation, dissemination and promotion of art in the city.

ELIAS(*) ROGENT (Barcelona, 1821 - Barcelona, 1897)

Elias Rogent i Amat was a scholar who enjoyed a unique and prolific career as an architect.

In 1840, he began his architectural studies at the Llotja School in Barcelona. He subsequently enrolled at the Special School of Architecture in Madrid and qualified as an architect in 1851.

In 1866 he was elected a member of the Academy of San Fernando and, in 1871, became the first director of the Provincial School of Architecture in Barcelona, from where he spearheaded a reform of architectural studies in Spain.

An active member of various institutions, ranging from the Provincial Academy of Fine Arts to the cultural association L'Ateneu Català, he took part in civic events, such as in his role as technical director of the 1888 Universal Exhibition in Barcelona.

He carried out his work mainly in Barcelona, but also worked in Vic (where he served as the town architect), Mataró, Sant Cugat del Vallès and Ripoll, amongst other places. He is regarded as one of the leading figures of the historicist architectural movement.

He was responsible for a wide variety of projects spanning the whole of Catalonia. From waterworks to various types of roads, urban development projects and a wide variety of buildings, including detached and multi-family homes, as well as industrial, administrative and educational premises.

In Mataró, he built La Presó (1863), the first correctional facility in Spain to be constructed according to the panoptic concept.

He also ventured into the world of archaeology and made a name for himself as a historian of Catalan architecture.

(*) Spelled as he signed.

ROUTE 2

IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLE, IN THE LIGHT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Through this tour, Mataró commemorates and revives its Roman past – a cultural heritage that combines architecture, industry and landscape in a marshy area, the ancient Roman settlement of Iluro, where the city's history began over 2,000 years ago.

From agricultural to industrial production; a leap back in time will take us to the industrial town of Mataró in the late 19th century, a period marked by significant technological changes and social movements.

In Mataró, the young Antoni Gaudí would find the opportunity to put cooperative principles into practice, designing and building his first project and experimenting with new architectural forms that would shape the new era and adapt to it.

FILES

1/ ROMAN VILLA OF TORRE LLAUDER
175 Castaños Street

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ROUTE 2
IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLE, IN THE LIGHT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

The origins of modern-day Mataró can be traced back to the Roman town of Iluro, founded in the first half of the 1st century BC as part of the reorganisation of the settlement following the Roman conquest. This city was the heart of a thriving agricultural region, particularly with regard to the production and exporting of wine, one of the main economic drivers of Laietània.

The Torre Llauder Archaeological Site preserves the remains of one of the most important villas in the area and is currently the most significant archaeological site in Mataró. The main part of the building dates from the time of Augustus, that is to say, the late 1st century BC.

Before the manor house was built, there was a cella vinaria on this very site – a rural estate dedicated to vine-growing, wine-making and the production of amphorae for exporting. Wine was distributed to Rome, the capital, and to other parts of the Roman Empire, such as Pompeii, Gaul and North Africa, as evidenced by the amphorae found in various Mediterranean ports.

This economic model fell out of use and, shortly afterwards, a large villa was built on the site, laid out over three south-facing terraces with sea views. The villa of Torre Llauder, as we know it today, was the summer residence of a wealthy landowner, his family and his slaves.

Judging by the structures that have been found, the upper terrace housed the most distinguished residential area, or pars urbana. This space was centred around a large entrance hall which led into an atrium featuring an ornamental pond surrounded by four columns. Its purpose was to provide access to the main rooms of the house – the stateliest and most lavishly decorated, featuring polychrome mosaics and murals. The tablinum was the most important room in the house, where the owner attended to political and economic affairs. Next came two dining rooms – one for summer and one for winter – designed to host banquets for guests and receptions.

There are also two large courtyards with porticoes, or peristyles. The garden on the east side was a fruit orchard surrounded by mosaics, with an ornamental watercourse running through the centre. The one on

the west side, which was also gardened and surrounded by a fence but larger, led to the private rooms or bedrooms.

The bathing area consisted of the changing room, or apodyterium, and a complete circuit of thermal baths comprising three distinct rooms: the frigidarium, for cold water; the tepidarium, for warm water; and the caldarium, for hot water, where the underground heating system can still be seen. At one end of the service area, the communal latrines have been preserved; they are equipped with a washbasin for personal hygiene.

This entire residential complex was surrounded by land set aside for the town's productive activities, known as pars rustica, where there were cultivated fields (mainly vineyards), warehouses, craft workshops and the dwellings of the workers and slaves.

The site was discovered in 1961 by the archaeologist Marià Ribas i Bertran (1902-1996), a native of Mataró, and three years later, given the significance of the finds, it was declared a historic-artistic monument of national interest.

The archaeological remains lay abandoned for many years until, in 1978, work began on the construction of a retaining wall to protect the site. Today, the preserved structures and mosaics are open to visitors and form part of a municipal site managed by Mataró Museum.

2/ NAU GAUDÍ - LA OBRERA MATARONENSE CO-OPERATIVE
47 Cooperative Street

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ROUTE 2
IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLE, IN THE LIGHT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Mataró plays an important role in Antoni Gaudí's professional career. For twelve years, between 1873 and 1885, the architect took part, for the first and only time, in a project aimed at improving the living and working conditions of the working class. Commissioned by Salvador Pagès, director of La Obrera Mataronense Co-operative Society, the young Gaudí developed a pioneering co-operative initiative and built his first three buildings: the director's house (1878), the factory latrines (1878-1880) and a cotton-bleaching shed (1883). The two remaining buildings have been preserved and stand as a testament to the beginning of Gaudí's architectural journey.

La Obrera Mataronense Co-operative, regarded as the first production co-operative in Spain, was founded in Mataró in 1864. Salvador Pagès argued that the co-operative should not limit itself to purely economic objectives, but should ensure the provision of the services necessary for its members to live, work, learn and enjoy their leisure time in dignified conditions.

In late 1874, La Obrera acquired some land in Mataró where the co-operative's ideals were to be put into practice. Pagès, who had known Gaudí since the late 1860s, handed the commission over to him and entrusted him with the project. On 29 March 1878, just fourteen days after qualifying as an architect, Gaudí presented his first two projects: the development of a residential area and a scale model of a detached house intended for workers. Of the thirty houses planned, only one was built: that of the Pagès family.

The colour drawings of the façades and the plans for the new casino, which was to replace an existing building, also date from May 1878. Gaudí's proposal arranged the co-operative's various facilities across three floors: a library, a school, a gym, a café, a meeting room and the consumer co-operative's storeroom, amongst others.

Between 1878 and 1880, Gaudí built the factory's toilets, incorporating an innovative internal ventilation system that he would later use in other buildings. This small building, decorated with ceramics, highlights one of the key features of his architecture: the inseparable link between functionality and aesthetics.

In August 1881, Gaudí signed off on the master plan for the La Obrera urban development project, which clearly distinguished between areas designated for housing, industry and services. Two years later, in July 1883, he submitted the plans for two new buildings: the entrance gate, which was never actually built, and the cotton-bleaching shed, known today as Nau Gaudí. In this building, he used parabolic arches for the first time as structural support elements. The original plan called for a hall with six bays, although this was subsequently extended to twelve.

Thanks to the co-operative ideals of Salvador Pagès, his first client, Antoni Gaudí not only designed and built his first three buildings in Mataró, but also began experimenting there with the architectural solutions that would ultimately define the work of one of the most universal architects in history.

ANTONI GAUDÍ (Reus or Riudoms, 1852 - Barcelona, 1926)

Antoni Gaudí i Cornet is regarded as one of the most universal figures in Catalan culture and modern architecture. His contribution to this discipline represented a break with established conventions, both in terms of form and in the construction and structural systems of his buildings, the result of great creativity and a unique, unprecedented methodology.

He studied at the Barcelona School of Architecture, where he graduated in 1878. Gaudí's training as an architect included a thorough understanding of the various trades and materials associated with the world of construction. This led him to constantly seek the 'total work of art' in his creative practice, in which he was as interested in the structural aspects of buildings as he was in each and every one of their constituent elements, such as ornamental details and furnishings.

Drawing inspiration from the principles of the Modernist movement, the innovative and experimental nature of his work goes beyond its formal and aesthetic dictates. Throughout his prolific career, Gaudí worked on religious buildings, residential areas and private homes, as well as on numerous projects that never came to fruition or were completed by his collaborators. In all these works, Gaudí demonstrates a keen interest in nature and geometry, and draws on technical innovations and his mastery of the crafts to create a highly personal style of architecture, characterised by great beauty, rationality and modernity.

Text taken from https://www.naugaudi.cat