

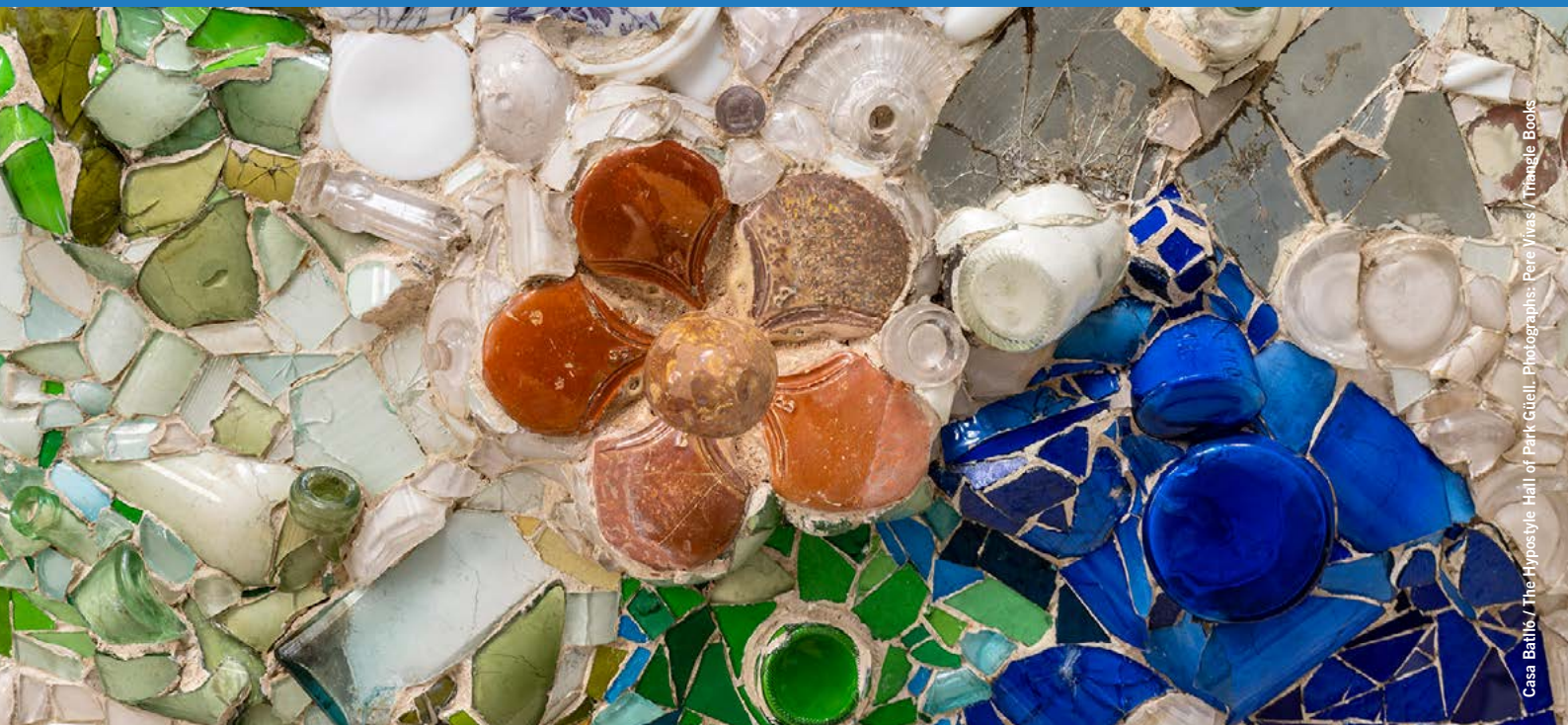


English

Gaudí & trencadís

MUSEU DE MARICEL

November 6th, 2021 - March 27th, 2022



Casa Batlló / The Hypostyle Hall of Park Güell. Photographs: Pere Vivas / Trianelle Books



Supported by:



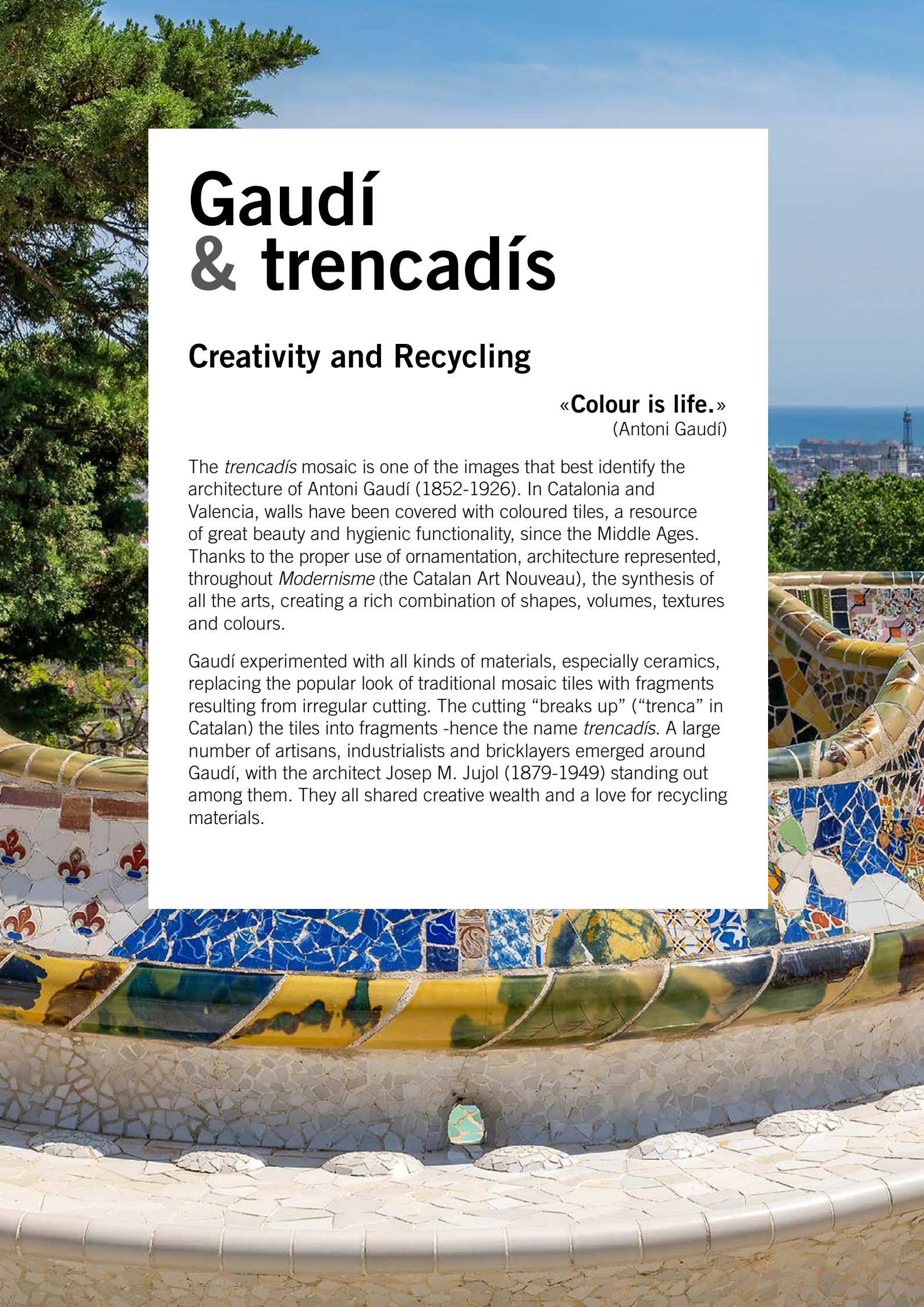
Gaudí & trencadís

Creativity and Recycling

«**Colour is life.**»
(Antoni Gaudí)

The *trencadís* mosaic is one of the images that best identify the architecture of Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926). In Catalonia and Valencia, walls have been covered with coloured tiles, a resource of great beauty and hygienic functionality, since the Middle Ages. Thanks to the proper use of ornamentation, architecture represented, throughout *Modernisme* (the Catalan Art Nouveau), the synthesis of all the arts, creating a rich combination of shapes, volumes, textures and colours.

Gaudí experimented with all kinds of materials, especially ceramics, replacing the popular look of traditional mosaic tiles with fragments resulting from irregular cutting. The cutting “breaks up” (“trenca” in Catalan) the tiles into fragments -hence the name *trencadís*. A large number of artisans, industrialists and bricklayers emerged around Gaudí, with the architect Josep M. Jujol (1879-1949) standing out among them. They all shared creative wealth and a love for recycling materials.



SPACE 1

Mosaic and its “Little Brother”, *Trencadís*. The Art of Fragmenting to Create an Undivided Whole

«When a thing is on the path to perfection, it must be squeezed to the end.»

(Antoni Gaudí)

The term “mosaic” means an elaborate composition “piece by piece”. The Art Nouveau mosaic gathers and recovers this technique from classical and Hispano-Arabic heritage and reinvents it to apply it to the new architecture. Gaudí used all the types of mosaic available at the time: Roman, stone, ceramic and their original derivation, *trencadís* which, despite being a manual technique, saved time and money. Other industrial products also defined as mosaics appeared at that time: hydraulics and ceramic stoneware pieces with which Gaudí experimented with surprising results.

The Legacy of Ancient Mosaics

Since the mid-nineteenth century, architects have been attracted to the beauty of the tile compositions on the walls of Spanish-Arabic buildings made with tiling, small pieces of regular-shaped ceramic pieces. Gaudí's *trencadís* was inspired by this type of covering, deconstructing regular geometry. Having been born in Reus, he had the opportunity to see some samples in the cloister of Poblet Monastery that was still preserved on site

1

L'ornament polychrome

Example of polychrome decoration through compilation books with colored plates.

M.A. Racinet (1825-1893)

Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie., 1869-1873

2

Gaudí's Fragment Evolution

Evolution from the regular geometric cut of Arabic tiles to the irregular fragments of *trencadís*.

Reproductions

20 x 20 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

Different Types of Mosaic in *Modernisme*: Roman, Venetian, Stone, Ceramic and the *Trencadís* Variant

Mosaics can be made out of natural materials (stone) and baked materials (ceramic and glass), from which different types are made. Ceramic was the most widely used material to be transformed into mosaic and *trencadís*. As it was made from irregular fragments, the latter did not need specialised workers and was quick to produce. Gaudí's phrase is famous: «They have to be thrown in handfuls or we will never finish.»

3

Roman Mosaic (floors)

Marble. Mainly peninsular, such as white Macael marble or Rosso Levanto red marble, but sometimes of very reputable foreign origin, such as Belgium Black marble.

Detail of the Casa Vicens floor

Reduced-scale reproduction

30 x 30 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

4

Venetian Mosaic (mainly, vertical surfaces)

Venetian coloured glass paste. In Catalonia it was used to create significant elements. It was the most expensive material and was later replaced by ceramic and ordinary glass.

Torre Bellesguard entrance panel

True-scale reproduction

30 x 30 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

5

Stone Mosaic (floors and vertical surfaces)

Common stone. Usually extracted from its own environment. The worn river boulders were fitted on floors, while unpolished stones were used for walls, imitating rockeries.

Detail of the Floor Leading Down to the Palau Güell stables

Reduced-scale reproduction

30 x 30 cm

Production: SIGNINUM

6

Ceramic Mosaic (vertical surfaces)

Industrial ceramics. Monochrome tiles were cut to make small tiles. Poorly baked pieces could be used at a lower cost.

Detail of the Casa Batlló rear balcony

True-scale reproduction

30 x 30 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

7

Trencadís (vertical faces)

Industrial ceramics. Tiles with or without a painted and raised pattern. They provided greater expression and, if they were older models or faulty, they were cheaper.

Detail of the Park Güell undulating *trencadís*

Reduced-scale reproduction

50 x 50 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

Other Surface Coating Techniques Also Defined as Mosaic: Hydraulic and “Gres” Ceramic Stoneware Mosaic

Other industrial techniques such as hydraulic flooring, small stoneware pieces with geometric shapes or pavement relief tiles are also referred to as “mosaic”. As in the case of other types, they are made up of various pieces, always covering surfaces. Gaudí used industrial products with great skill, such as on Casa Batlló, for which he designed a hydraulic mosaic and where he reused stoneware tiles.

8

Hydraulic Mosaic (interior flooring)

Produced with three layers of cement of different grain sizes, the exposed layer creates the pattern with coloured cement. It was a very common application system in both simple and luxurious houses.

20th century
Original
20 x 20 cm

10

Gaudí Monochrome and Relief Hydraulic Mosaic (interior flooring)

Gaudí created this flooring with a drawing that required seven pieces in order to be viewed with three marine motifs: the snail, the star and the jellyfish. This model was later transformed and marketed as a relief tile in Barcelona as a tribute to Gaudí.

Escofet & Cia., 20th century
Original
25 x 28 cm

12

“Gres” Ceramic Stoneware Mosaic (mainly, interior flooring)

Reuse of the tesserae of the previous model, reproducing a drawing of the floor of the Casa Batlló courtyard, without the involvement of specialist operators at Gaudí’s instructions: «don’t worry about the design: whatever will be, will be.»

Hijos de Miguel Nolla de Valencia, 19th – 20th centuries
Reproduction with original materials
33 x 33 cm
Production: CHROMA

9

Relief Tile or Shaved Tile (exterior flooring)

Made with two layers of cement. This is very hard and applied mainly to city pavements. The exposed type is an icon of Barcelona.

Escofet, 21th century
Original
20 x 20 cm

11

“Gres” Ceramic Stoneware Mosaic (mainly, interior flooring)

A very hard type of ceramic fired at a high temperature. Fitted by specialist company operators, due to its technical complexity.

Hijos de Miguel Nolla de Valencia, 19th – 20th centuries
Reproduction with original materials of the time
33 x 33 cm
Production: CHROMA

SPACE 2

Evolution of *Trencadís* in Gaudí's Work. Step by Step. Construction by Construction

«A true artist manages to make beauty
emerge from the rubble itself.»

(Reference to the chimneys of the Palau Güell, *La Vanguardia*, 1890)

Fragmented ceramics have become an identifying element of Gaudí's work. The historical itinerary of this architectural "skin" began in the Les Corts Pavilions, where pottery was used in fragments for the first time. In previous constructions, Casa Vicens in Barcelona (1883-1888) and El Capricho in Comillas (1883-1885), an orderly grid of ceramic tiles on the facing of the brick wall still prevailed.

From the roofs of the Güell Pavilions (1887) to the final construction, the Sagrada Família (1926), the *trencadís* was transformed by incorporating different materials that were either unusual or made from recycled rubble. This became the colour of the undulating forms in Gaudí's architecture.

The Entrance Pavilions of Torre Güell in Les Corts (Barcelona, 1884-1887). The Decomposition of Regular Geometry

This complex was the first commission received by Gaudí from Eusebi Güell. The well-known dragon iron gate connects two buildings: the keeper's residence and the stables. Gaudí used *trencadís* for the first time due to Mudejar influence, still combining regular geometric pieces and always using low-cost ceramic materials.

13

Tiles (imitation marble)

Very cheap types of marbled ceramic known as "fregalls" (scouring pads) that were normally used as skirting boards.

19th century

Original

15 x 15 cm / 20 x 20 cm

14

These are the first pieces that go from tiles to fragments, creating the idea of *trencadís*. They go from a regular to an irregular cut.

Reproduction with original materials

30 x 30 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

15

Decorated Mortar

The entrance brick mortar is decorated with small, embedded fragments.

Reproduction with original materials

28 x 29 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

A Palace for the Güell Family (Barcelona, 1886-1888). Functional Sculpture

Gaudí built this building as the Güell family's residence. *Trencadís* was applied to the upper terrace, covering the chimneys and the large skylight in the house, creating geometric sculptures. Here he used all the types of materials that he would later apply to future constructions. In this case, they were all disused recycled products that provided a great chromatic and textural richness visible from the street.

16

Samples of Materials

Recovered tiles, window glass, remnants of floor marble, fragments of porcelain objects and the vitrified sandstone layer inside lime kilns, form the catalogue of basic materials for Gaudí's *trencadís*, that has already been outlined in this work.

Materials and original objects

17

Recovered Tiles

Models of tile recovered from Palau Fonollar and applied to Palau Güell, inside the house and the upper terrace.

Hijos de Jaume Pujol y Bausis, 19th century

Reproduction

20 x 20 cm

Production: Ceràmiques SOT

Torre Bellesguard (Barcelona, 1900-1909). Stone, Cladding and Natural Resources

Torre Bellesguard is an isolated house with a garden commissioned by Maria Sagués, widow of Jaume Figueras, built above the former Palace of the Catalan king Martí l'Humà. The great novelty of the work is the experimentation with natural stone coating over the façades and the tower's glass cladding, drawing the four bars of the Catalan shield. The garden features mosaic and *trencadís* benches, made by Gaudí's collaborator, Domènec Sugrañes (1878-1938).

18

Glass

Painted glass stuck to the mortar was used to create colours. This experiment caused the pieces to come off easily, so Gaudí avoided using this system again.

Reproduction

20

Garden benches (c. 1902 - 1904)

Made by Domènec Sugrañes. The detail belongs to one of the benches flanking the entrance. It depicts the back of a fish crowned with the four bars of the Catalan shield as a historical symbol of the place.

Reduced-scale reproduction

30 x 30 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

19

Stone Bearings Made in a Mould

The stone for covering the façade came from the area around the house itself and were sorted by shades of colour: dark grey, green and yellow. The use of moulds made it easier to make and place the components.

True-scale reproduction

15 x 15 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

Casa Batlló (Barcelona, 1904-1906). Fragments as the Units of the Organic Element

Casa Batlló is the result of a house refurbishment commissioned by Josep Batlló i Casanovas, a textile industrialist who gave Gaudí complete freedom. Different types of *trencadís*, mainly glass, surround the construction –the main façade, the rear façade and the upper terrace. The fragments create a multicellular being that extends throughout the house, while different techniques, textures and colours come together.

21

Main Façade Made of Glass and Ceramic

Coated in stained glass and custom-made circular ceramic pieces. The glass was applied following the colours of the circles, and the joints also changed colour.

Reproduction

50 x 50 cm / Ø 35, 27, 21, 15 cm

Production: Montse Agüero and Ceràmiques SOT

22

Stylised Flower

Highly stylised figurative images were recovered, possibly with the involvement of his collaborator, Josep M. Jujol.

Reduced-scale reproduction

20 x 20 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

23

Glass ball with coloured sand

According to Josep Bayó's account to Joan Bassegoda, this crowned the chimneys of the terrace. This item that had been lost has now been recovered.

Reproduction according to the current restoration

Ø 17 cm

Loaned by Casa Batlló

Park Güell (Barcelona, 1900-1914). The Ceiling Lights in the Hypostyle Hall. Primitive Surrealism (1909)

The construction of this urban project started by Eusebi Güell began in 1900. Although the gatehouse pavilions and the monumental staircase (1902-1906) also contain spectacular pieces of ceramic *trencadís*, it is on the roofs of the Hypostyle Hall that Josep M. Jujol created an unusual world with recycled materials. The central elements are four suns representing the seasons, accompanied by smaller moons.

24

Disused Materials from One of the Moons

Use of components for a new function.

Ceramic scales, glass candlesticks, bottles of different colours, porcelain tableware or, even, a figure. Mirror shards were also used, increasing the reflection of light in an extraordinary way.

Materials and original objects

Park Güell (1900-1914). The Undulating Bench. The Colour Viewpoint over Barcelona (1909-1914)

This impressive architectural element, a bench railing made of iron beams and brick modules and suspended above the Hypostyle Hall, was designed by Gaudí and covered with *trencadís* by Josep M. Jujol. There may have been an initial blueprint, but the drawing was conceived as the materials were acquired, joining fragments from different creative hands. Hence the diversity of the design.

25

Samples of Original Materials on the Bench

Painted ceramic is one of the most unique elements. The motif is not obtained only through shapes and colours, as the tile itself is already decorated. Because of this, technical perfection is not sought, and the main priority is the expression obtained from the use of multiple combinations of materials.

Materials and original objects

Casa Milà Segimon, La Pedrera (Barcelona, 1906-1911). Shape Over Colour

Casa Milà Segimon, generally known as *La Pedrera*, is a new construction that occupies a large corner. The developers were Pere Milà i Camps and Roser Segimon i Artells. *Trencadís* applications can be found at the stair exits and the chimneys on the roof. Gaudí plays with the infinite possibilities of white in stone and ceramic, breaking with the chromatics he had previously experimented with.

26

Baked Materials (ceramic, porcelain)

The difference in shades of white stands out. At that time, this colour was one of the most difficult to obtain, because the base of the enamel was always contaminated, resulting in different shades. This can be seen by comparing it with the pure white of the valuable china of the crockery.

Original materials

28

A Touch of Green

This element, which is attributed to Josep M. Jujol, shows again how a simple material could be transformed, while reminding us of the finishes of the popular garden walls.

Reduced-scale reproduction

40 x 40 cm

Production: Montse Agüero

27

Natural Materials (stone)

Gaudí created textures from different types of stone. The Ulldecona (Tarragona) stone, especially the one known as Sènia, which contains small fossils, as well as the Xert stone, are particularly noteworthy. In white marbles, the use of Macael, Tranco from Almeria and Italian Carrara marbles are particularly worth noting.

Material loaned by Gamarra & García

Colònia Güell Church (1908-1914). The Relevance of Essential Materials

The *colònia*, a manufacturing suburb composed of a factory and houses, was founded by Eusebi Güell in 1890, moving the factory he had in Sants. Gaudí designed the church in 1898, but the construction work did not start until 1908, and it was never finished. The exterior, on which a large *trencadís* was applied, contains all kinds of cladding from deteriorated materials or from debris, such as steel slag or pieces from other buildings in progress.

29

Recovery of Materials

In this work, he used many previously dismissed works, ignoring the original use of the materials. For example, there are several fishes cut out on the ceramic circles of Casa Batlló.

Reproduction
Ø 21 cm
Production: Ceràmiques SOT

30

Fish on the Walls

A number of glass fish stand out among the diversity of materials and religious symbols, adapting and hiding among the deformations of the walls.

True-scale reproduction
70 x 40 cm
Production: Montse Agüero

31

Unglazed Tile

This apparently chaotic cut recovers the regular geometry of the tiles from biscuit tiles.

Original

CONCLUSION

The Last Stop: The Sagrada Família

The identification between beauty and truth frames the deep religiousness of the architect's adult years, which were dedicated exclusively –body and soul– to the Sagrada Família. Gaudí, who only saw the bell tower of Sant Bernabé finished, wanted to apply the highest quality and most expensive mosaic, Venetian glass, to the pinnacles of the cathedral.

32

In the Bell Towers...

Gaudí waited four years for his Venetian glass order to arrive so he could crown the first tower. His intention was to produce this material in Catalonia.

True-scale reproduction of one sphere, Venetian Mosaic and current "Gres" Ceramic
Ø 45 cm
Production: Montse Agüero; material loaned by the
Basílica de la Sagrada Família



We will finish with a few words by Gaudí, recorded by his pupil Joan Bergós that capture the architect's admiration for the beauty of a material that he identifies with the meaning of the bell tower, uniting the earth with the sky:

«Watch this ending! Is it not true that it seems to connect the earth with the sky? This explosion of mosaics is the first thing that sailors will see when they arrive in Barcelona. It will be a radiant welcome!»

